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ABSTRACT

Four issues of a newsletter form this document. The first issue, Winter 1991, includes the following articles: "Ensuring Quality"; "Wordpower--Actions and Reactions"; "Corporate Links with the Community"; "The Road to Progress in Siberia"; and "Teaching Visually Handicapped Students." In the Spring 1991 issue are the following: "Changing Structures--Same Needs"; "Boxing Clever"; "Using Audio Tapes in ABE (Adult Basic Education)"; "Adult Literacy on Interactive Compact Disc"; and "Short Courses." The Summer 1991 issue includes the following: "Developing a 'Kite Mark' for Basic Education and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)"; "Working Together for Success--A Partnership in Action"; "New Initiatives for Unemployed People with Literacy and Numeracy Needs"; and "Talking Drawings: A Strategy for Assisting Learners." In the Autumn 1991 issue are the following: "Using Staff Training to Improve Quality"; "ESOL in Rural Areas: Adapting ABE to Meet the Needs"; and "Evaluating the Effectiveness of Different Styles of Literacy Provision." Issues also include information on adult literacy activities and book reviews. (NLA)

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Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit

Newsletter

Nos. 40-43

1991

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WINTER
1991

No 40

NEWSLETTER

ALBSU

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

Photo Peter Ward

Ensuring quality (see page 2).

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ENSURING QUALITY

The most important objective in Basic Education is to ensure that every student gets high quality teaching. There are two major sets of factors which affect the quality of teaching. Some are external to the actual teaching process; some are directly related to teaching and learning. Both of these sets of factors are important, although it's probably impossible to say which is the most crucial.

Some of the external factors which affect the quality of teaching in basic education have featured prominently before in the ALBSU Newsletter. For example, low levels of funding tend to adversely affect basic education teaching. Poor funding usually means that little support is available for teachers and tutors from more experienced staff. There are often few opportunities to get together with others working in basic education and not much chance of teachers and tutors learning from each other or benefiting from sharing similar experiences.

Even the most experienced practitioners find it useful to be able to seek advice when faced with a difficult problem or when, as happens to every one, teaching doesn't appear to be going well. Isolation seldom works to the benefit of anyone and teachers and tutors who feel that they have little to learn or gain from sharing with other practitioners are usually those who should worry us the most.

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LEARNING MATERIAL

Lack of funding usually means that little acceptable learning material is available for students. Everyone has to 'make do and mend' and books which were of questionable quality when new are still used regularly. Old, tatty, child orientated books, based on endless rote practice of fairly useless skills, (often it's difficult to identify the skills being taught), still feature in some basic education classes. Even worse are the totally inappropriate, and culturally loaded, books which disfigure poorly funded ESOL provision. Often designed for teaching English as a Foreign language, much of the material perpetuates a form of educational colonialism. ESOL students in some areas are still reading texts about the 'pub culture' of England 50 years ago, often because these are the only books available.

The carrier bag of books and other material brought in by the teacher before the lesson is too often the major method of providing materials and the ingenuity of teachers who 'beg borrow and steal' to provide for their groups never ceases to amaze. The locked cupboard in well stocked schools, the lack of display space in rooms with empty walls and the carrier bag don't help to provide high quality tuition. Whilst there are often computer rooms in schools, empty in the evening when many classes meet, some bureaucratic or administrative nightmare means that this technology is often not available for the basic education class. The resources exist but no one can get to use them.

ESOL students in some areas are still reading texts about the 'pub culture' of England 50 years ago . . .

ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation used for basic education might not be quite so critical to the quality of teaching. Effective teaching often takes place in the most abysmal surroundings and sometimes, it has to be said, poor teaching takes place in well decorated centres. ALBSU believes that basic education students are not well served, however, by being relegated to the most inconvenient, least desirable rooms in colleges and centres – rooms that few other

people want or would use. It is fair enough to use, and accept it as a necessary evil, poorly decorated and badly sited rooms in some community centres or voluntary organisations, otherwise basic education could not exist in many areas where it is needed.

A group meeting on a disadvantaged housing estate often provides the only learning opportunity for people who would not be willing or able to travel to a better decorated, yet less local, centre. Why, however, are basic education groups often assigned to the worst rooms in otherwise nice and welcoming buildings? Is it just accident or does it indicate that basic education classes are less important than so called prestigious courses and classes?

It's not possible to include all of the factors related to inadequate funding and no one would claim that the quality of basic education teaching is entirely related to funding levels. However, the level of funding in basic education does play a part and more poor teaching is apparent in the poorly funded basic education programmes.

Why are basic education groups often assigned to the worst rooms in otherwise nice and welcoming buildings?

STAFFING

Most funding is used for staffing and up to 80% of the cost of basic education is related to staffing costs, even allowing for the significant use of unpaid volunteers. The disparity of staffing levels in basic education in England and Wales is quite startling. The number of staff involved is usually expressed as a Staff/Student Ratio. In simple terms this means the number of full-time staff to the number of full-time students. In a service like basic education, where few staff or students are full-time, this is usually expressed as a full-time equivalent.

According to the statistics returned to ALBSU each year the Staff/Student Ratio in basic education ranges from 1 full-time equivalent member of staff to every 2 full-time equivalent students in one LEA to 1 full-time equivalent member of staff to every 30 full-time equivalent students in another. The average for England and Wales is about 1 full time staff member to 11 full-time students. (These figures only include paid staff and, therefore exclude volunteers.)

SUPPORTING TEACHING

Often the number of staff or the lack of staff is less of a problem than what the staff are employed to do. Lack of administrative support staff often means that teachers spend too much time on administration and management, rather than on teaching and organising basic education. Administrative support staff are often forgotten in basic education, yet they provide an invaluable, skilled service. Without them few records are accessible, few students get greeted when they first come through the door and little local teaching material is produced. Often these posts are the first to be dispensed with when cuts take place.

How can every teacher ensure that high quality teaching is provided for every student?

All of these, to some extent external factors have an effect on the quality of teaching, although it is not always clear to what extent they are critical. The main factor, however, is what goes on in the teaching session – the skill and expertise of the teacher. Poor teaching means that students learn less effectively, drop-out is higher and both teacher and student end up frustrated.

Debate about teaching methods is rife at the moment and it would take too long and probably this and many more issues of the Newsletter to go into all of the arguments about teaching methods and approaches that have been aired in the press recently. Suffice to say often the most precious gift – common sense – is missing in the arguments and debate concentrates on trying to find the single teaching method which will work with everyone. (The argument about whether literacy standards have risen or fallen is about as useful as arguing about whether people are better drivers today than 50 years ago; literacy demands, just like the demands of driving, don't stand still over a period of time).

Experience over the last fifteen years strongly suggests that teachers in basic education need to have a variety of teaching approaches available rather than believing that one approach is universally effective. Students in basic education – adults who feel that they have inadequate mastery of reading, writing, spelling and basic maths – reflect the fashions in teaching since the end of the last War. Some have suffered from a slavish approach to phonics and attack all words, however irregular, in the same way. Often they have been so confused by endless rules that they can't spot the exceptions to the rule and many poor spellers would be recognised as good spellers if our language was as regular as Finnish.

Other people have no idea of the common sounds of the language and rely on shape or memory to recognise words when reading or writing. Again this might be fine if there weren't so many words in the language and if everyone had phenomenal memories and powers of recognition. Not to teach people that some generalities exist in English is to disempower, not empower, learners.

The argument about whether literacy standards have risen or fallen is about as useful as arguing about whether people are better drivers today than 50 years ago; literacy demands, just like the demands of driving, don't stand still over a period of time.

STRUCTURING TEACHING

Teaching needs structure whatever approach is used and clear learning plans should be a requirement of all teachers in basic education. The recently published HMI Reports on 'The Teaching and Learning of Reading in Primary Schools' suggest that clear policies on the teaching of reading, good management and maintaining a mixture of teaching methods are particularly important factors in effective literacy work in schools. Whilst not everything about teaching reading to children is relevant to adults, few would disagree that effective adult literacy teaching similarly depends on clear policies, good management and a mix of approaches and techniques.

If nothing else, the introduction of Wordpower and Numberpower have set out the competencies needed to be an effective reader and writer and to be confident and competent in basic maths. Only being able to read at one speed or one type of material, or only being able to write in one style is not adequate for modern society. Confusing the style needed to write your autobiography with the style needed to apply for a job may not seem important, but for many people it is an expensive mistake.

There is, perhaps, no single key to effective teaching. What is clear, however, is that effective teaching is more likely with well trained teachers – teachers who have expertise in teaching, can use a variety of approaches and can translate the rhetoric of student centred learning into clear, achievable and negotiated learning plans. Teachers who recognise the need to update their knowledge and improve their skills, who can tell the difference between good and poor learning material and who explain the competencies contained in specific teaching and learning activities to students are effective teachers. Those who trust in common sense, rather than leave all common sense outside the classroom when they start to teach in favour of an often senseless, and in the end damaging, fashion, will always be valued whatever and wherever they teach. ■

WORDPOWER – ACTIONS AND REACTIONS

Shelley McAlister, a basic education co-ordinator in West London, reviewed the reactions of a number of tutors during the early stages of the introduction of Wordpower. In this article she summarises her findings.

Evaluating innovation

Someone once suggested that the vitality of a new movement can be gauged by the fury it arouses. As a co-ordinator of adult basic education, I sensed a certain amount of concern, if not fury, during the launch of the new Wordpower certificate in basic education. I have just completed an evaluation of tutor reaction to the Wordpower certificate, which I used as part of an MA degree in Education at the Open University.

There is much research on the success and more often, failure, of educational innovations. Research into educational change has shown repeatedly that it is difficult to introduce an innovation which runs counter to the attitudes of teachers, and that teachers are unlikely to accept any change which intrudes on either their relationships with students or their professional autonomy in the classroom. While teachers may accept an innovation as 'a good idea', they may pay lip service to the change without accepting its underlying rationale: this has been called 'innovation without change'[1].

Like most educational innovations, the success of Wordpower is dependent to a great extent on the willingness and ability of participating tutors, trainers, organisers and co-ordinators to carry it out. Ownership and acceptance of Wordpower will require participants in basic education to make adjustments to both attitude and practice. At the same time, attention must be paid to resources and support structures: Fullan[2] advocates 'time for change', including opportunities for informal conversation with colleagues about the meaning of change. However, innovation research shows that the time, resources and the amount of support needed to change teachers' attitudes and practices are very often underestimated.

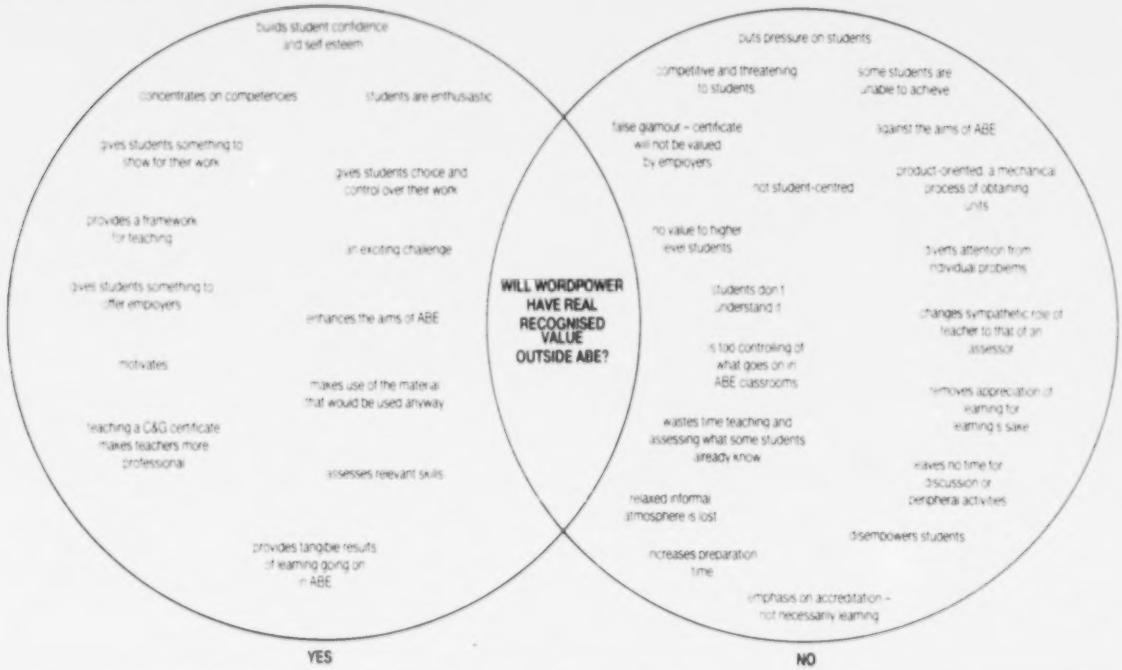
The aim of the evaluation is to discover and describe what it is like to be participating in the Wordpower scheme from the point of view of tutors, organisers and co-ordinators. I attempted to identify areas of resistance and acceptance, as well as practical and philosophical problems, using research questions based on Fullan's[3] findings on teacher reaction to innovation and educational change:

a) Will the change benefit students?
b) Is it procedurally clear and practical to carry out?
c) What are the costs to teachers in terms of time, energy and anxiety in using it?

Methods

The evaluation took place from February to July 1990. There were 31 informants in all, representing 5 boroughs in London and the home counties. Half of the informants are part-time tutors, most of whom teach basic education less than 4 hours per week. Other informants are: part-time Open Learning tutors 3; Co-

Does Wordpower benefit students and tutors?. Figure 1.

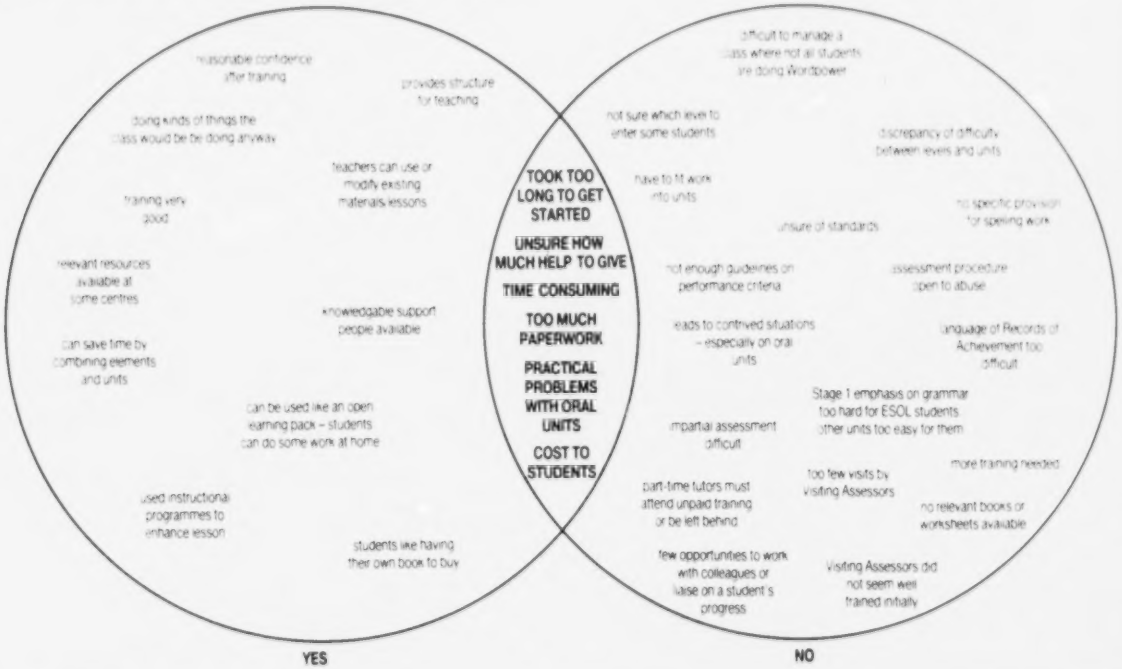

builds student confidence and self esteem
concentrates on competences
students are enthusiastic
gives students something to show for their work
gives students choice and control over their work
provides a framework for teaching
an exciting challenge
gives students something to offer employers
enhances the aims of ABE
motivates
makes use of the material that would be used anyway
teaching a C&G certificate makes teachers more professional
assesses relevant skills
provides tangible results of learning going on in ABE
WILL WORDPOWER HAVE REAL RECOGNISED VALUE OUTSIDE ABE?
puts pressure on students
competitive and threatening to students
some students are unable to achieve
false glamour – certificate will not be valued by employers
against the aims of ABE
not student-centred
product-oriented, a mechanical process of obtaining units
no value to higher level students
diverts attention from individual problems
students don't understand it
changes sympathetic role of teacher to that of an assessor
is too controlling of what goes on in ABE classrooms
removes appreciation of learning for learning's sake
wastes time teaching and assessing what some students already know
leaves no time for discussion or peripheral activities
relaxed informal atmosphere is lost
disempowers students
increases preparation time
emphasis on accreditation – not necessarily learning
YES
NO

ordinators/Organisers 8; Visiting Assessors 2; prison tutors and volunteers 3.

Teaching style: tutors who felt committed to a particular teaching style or method tended to view accreditation less favourably than those who used a variety of methods. Some tutors claimed that Wordpower interferes with group teaching and introduces competition which can be threatening to students. On the other hand, some tutors used Wordpower as a framework for their teaching and welcomed the introduction of books, television programmes and opportunities for introducing new topics and activities.

View of Basic Education goals: tutors have different views on the nature of basic education: whether, for example, ABE should be aiming at vocational goals or encouraging learning for learning's sake. Some tutors felt strongly that the teaching of social skills is inappropriate in ABE and reacted negatively to the 'oral units'. While

Is the Wordpower scheme clear and practical to carry out? Figure 2


reasonable confidence after training
provides structure for teaching
doing kinds of things the class would be be doing anyway
teachers can use or modify existing materials/lessons
training very good
relevant resources available at some centres
knowledgable support people available
can save time by combining elements and units
can be used like an open learning pack – students can do some work at home
used instructional programmes to enhance lesson
students like having their own book to buy
TOOK TOO LONG TO GET STARTED
UNSURE HOW MUCH HELP TO GIVE
TIME CONSUMING
TOO MUCH PAPERWORK
PRACTICAL PROBLEMS WITH ORAL UNITS
COST TO STUDENTS
difficult to manage a class where not all students are doing Wordpower
not sure which level to enter some students
discrepancy of difficulty between levels and units
have to fit work into units
unsure of standards
no specific provision for spelling work
not enough guidelines on performance criteria
assessment procedure open to abuse
leads to contrived situations – especially on oral units
language of Records of Achievement too difficult
Stage 1 emphasis on grammar too hard for ESOL students other units too easy for them
impartial assessment difficult
more training needed
too few visits by visiting Assessors
part-time tutors must attend unpaid training or be left behind
no relevant books or worksheets available
few opportunities to work with colleagues or liaise on a student's progress
Visiting Assessors did not seem well trained initially
YES
NO

some tutors described Wordpower as offering challenge and motivation to students, as well as choice and control over their work, others worry that accreditation goes against the student-centred aims of ABE because it is product-oriented, 'a mechanical process of obtaining units'.

The main question tutors ask themselves is whether Wordpower is worth doing: will it have real recognised value to employers and further education or is it, in the words of one sceptic, just false glamour? Few tutors, especially part-timers, had any knowledge of National Vocational Qualifications, although the involvement of City and Guilds, an institution well recognised, is seen as lending status both to the certificate and to the professionalism of ABE tutors.

Coping Strategies

Informants had developed a variety of strategies to cope with Wordpower, some of them practical, some extreme. Responses often indicated the tutor's negative or positive attitude towards Wordpower, as well as reflecting on the local ABE scheme as a whole.

Some tutors found the structure of Wordpower a new and unwelcome challenge. Responses to the 'problem' of structure included: being adaptable and taking on new attitudes towards teaching and planning; adapting current ways of working to the Wordpower structure; adapting Wordpower to current ways of working; using the structure as a framework for teaching; treating Wordpower like an Open Learning pack which students can do partly at home.

There was uncertainty about standards required and/or what work to set in order to satisfy the requirements of Wordpower. In the absence of definite guidelines about standards required, most tutors decided to aim for the highest standards rather than lower, and some assumed that is what is wanted. Some consulted colleagues for the standards they use and a few conferred directly with their Visiting Assessor. In developing materials, local schemes either used fulltime staff or paid part-time staff extra hours to develop a resources bank for Wordpower. Some schemes have held materials workshops to pool ideas and materials.

There was particular concern about classes where some, but not all, students wanted to do Wordpower. Responses are: offering separate Wordpower Workshops, offering joint literacy/numeracy classes for accreditation students, relying on Open Learning centres to do Wordpower and using volunteers to work with single or paired Wordpower candidates within a class. For tutors who favour group teaching, the whole class carries out the same exercise and the tutor writes up summaries only for those participating in Wordpower. In some classes tutors write up summaries for all students, in case Wordpower credit is wanted later on.

Lack of time was one of the major problems identified. At some centres only fulltime staff teach Wordpower as it is thought to be impractical for part-timers to do Wordpower training and assessing within their limited hours. Some schemes have been unable to attract part time tutors to (unpaid) training sessions: one has achieved good attendance by inviting part-timers for half-day training and paying them for one hour plus lunch. (This covers childcare costs, a frequent reason given for not attending training.) In some centres coordinators are active in assessing and writing up summaries and some offered mini-training sessions before classes or during breaks. Other responses to time pressures include: devoting a session every few weeks to Wordpower; leaving 15 minutes at the end of each class for doing paperwork; using volunteers to write up after the tutor has assessed; typing and photocopying summaries when all students are doing the same assessment and using cross-referencing to achieve efficiency.

The 'oral units' (Foundation 5 and 6, Units 5, 6 and 7 at Stage 1) are thought to be the most difficult to plan for and assess, especially for Open Learning centres, when assessments must be carried out in the same room where non-assessment students are still working. There was fear that simulated situations would be contrived and some expressed embarrassment at asking their higher level students to carry out simple tasks such as telephone calls, while tutors of lower-attaining students doubted the ability of their students to satisfy the criteria. In either case, tutors found the oral units a challenge and only a few had attempted them. Some tutors intended to pass everyone automatically on Units 5 and 6, based on their personal knowledge of the students: it was acknowledged that this was probably not in the spirit intended and there were concerns about what to write on the summary sheets. Some tutors put the responsibility on the students to find situations in their own homes or work where they achieved the criteria: this was very successful in one centre at both Foundation and Stage 1 levels. One open learning centre hired in a personal skills tutor to deal specifically with the oral units.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Tutors asked for a number of things to help them deal with Wordpower. From BSAI/City and Guilds they required clear and definite guidelines and examples of work showing acceptable standards and including specific guidance on spelling, grammar and punctuation errors and how much help to allow. They wanted co-ordinated books, worksheets and BBC programmes, with guidance on how to use them in the classroom, together with simpler Records of Achievement which are suitable for students to read and understand. (Some of these are now being provided by ALBSU). In addition, they requested that students be able to work within two levels within each unit. Finally, they desired a higher profile for Wordpower in the media and evidence that the certificate will be known and accepted by employers.

From local ABE schemes tutors require:

1. Encouragement and practical help from co-ordinators.
2. More training opportunities, especially to get materials and share ideas.
3. Paid training time or reimbursement for childcare while attending training.
4. Time for dealing with paperwork within paid hours.
5. A resources bank of multi-skills materials.
6. Access to photocopying where class is sited.
7. Access to copies of radio and TV programmes.
8. Someone to contact for definite answers to specific Wordpower questions.

The need for training is shown by tutors' lack of confidence in dealing with the scheme initially and by the problems and issues that arise after it has been tried. To some extent information will be passed between tutors informally, but this cannot be assumed as part-timers usually have few opportunities to talk to their colleagues, and some work on isolated sites. Training will need to be on-going and every encouragement given to part-timers to attend.

At the local level, much attention should be paid to the demands made on tutor's time and every effort should be made to accommodate tutors with training, resources and readily available support. This will gradually lead both tutors and students to more confidence and independence in working with Wordpower and ultimately, increased ownership and acceptance of the accreditation scheme. In the meantime, we may do well to recognise that the 'fury' surrounding accreditation probably indicates that Wordpower is alive and well.

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CORPORATE LINKS
WITH THE COMMUNITY

Geoffrey Bush, Director of Grand Metropolitan Community Services Trust, describes how a major company contributes to training and development.

Grand Metropolitan PLC is respected internationally for its management, enterprise and growth record. It specialises in highly branded consumer businesses in food, drinks and retailing.

The last decade has seen a significant growth in its involvement in the community both in the UK and the USA. The rationale for this is demonstrated in its philosphy towards community partnership: *'we believe we have responsibilities to four major groups of individuals – our shareholders, our customers, our employees and the people who live in the communities in which we operate'*.

GrandMet's community work in the UK is for the most part administered and co-ordinated by Grand Metropolitan Community Services whose activities include: inner city regeneration initiatives, support for young people and the disabled, charitable donations, industry/education links and youth and adult training programmes.

In addition, many GrandMet companies are involved in their local communities, increasingly through TECs – Sir Allen Sheppard, the Company's Chairman and Chief Executive, is a member of the National Training Task Force and the Group is linked to 19 TECs and 5 LECs.

GrandMet Community Services Trust, formed eight years ago, is now one of the largest private training providers in the UK. The Trust's purpose is expressed in its mission statement: *'to help people develop their skills and qualifications for employment to the benefit of themselves, employers and the community'*. Based in Brighton it runs Youth and Employment Training, Job Clubs and Restart Courses at 60 locations in London, the South East, South West, Midlands, North West and Scotland. Approximately 40,000 young people and adults have joined the Trust's programmes and some 6,000 are currently participating, principally on its 250 vocational training courses.

The YT and ET programmes conform to current requirements – occupationally based, directed and practical training geared towards the achievement of nationally recognised vocational qualifications.

Where trainees need help with basic skills their tuition is generally set in a vocational context. Many training centres have gained, or are seeking accreditation to deliver the City and Guilds Wordpower and Numberpower cetificates. Trainees are offered the opportunity to gain these qualifications as part of their action plans where appropriate.

Although our training complies with national standards flexibilities in our operating network enable us to tailor the occupational menu, content and delivery techniques to suit local requirements.

For example, at Stratford, East London, where electrical installation training is offered in addition to literacy, numeracy and language support, all programmes are now supported by Open Learning which complements individual and group tuition. Everyone is taught study skills and encouraged to use the OL facilities which are becoming very popular.

The Roll on-Roll off programme allows individuals to work at their own pace, learning how to use word processing packages, writing articles about themselves, and generally overcoming any fears of technology. Tutor support is crucial – in establishing starting points and guiding trainees through a work plan appropriate to their ability levels.

Trainees can spend up to 6 months on the basic skills and language training courses – 3 months intensive tuition aimed at providing survival language and leading trainees toward an occupational focus, followed by 3 months preparation for vocational training if needed.

The Stratford Centre keeps abreast of developments in skills training:-

- It is involved with the Access to Literacy For Adults Project (ALFA) as part of a network of employers, education and training providers and the London Enterprise Agency (LENTA) which is working on a model for literacy provision for London.
- In collaboration with Hackney College and supported by Employment Department funding it is designing a WORKPACK course for its English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme. The pack will be produced in Urdu, Bengali and Punjabi to start with.
- Plans for 1991 include the opening of a language laboratory where modern European languages will be available in addition to support for the ESOL programme.

Innovative practices such as these with proven successes – 70% pass rate from ESOL participants – have earned the London operation two National Training Awards – for developments in Basic Skills Provision and in its Advanced Driving Instruction programme at the North Woolwich Training Centre.

In the South East, at Tunbridge Wells, Open Learning is also used in delivering basic skills and vocational training. The training centre there works in partnership with the local Adult Education Institute and College of Further Education. A recent success story is that of a 57 year old trainee with severe literacy and numeracy difficulties. Fifteen months on he now reads with confidence and is employed in a carpentry workshop.

The Scottish operations have a Basic Skills tutors' network which brings tutors together to share and develop good practice although areas' approaches vary.

For example in Edinburgh, where the centre is seeking accreditation to run Numberpower and Wordpower, a system of City and Guilds profiling has been adopted. Provision is client based so that individual packages can be designed if appropriate. Profiles are written in user-friendly language and strong emphasis is placed on assessment and progress review.

We operate in partnership with many local and national organisations as both supporter of and participator in initiatives for increasing the prosperity of the community. The Trust is currently sponsoring the two BBC Television programmes on numeracy – *Sum Chance* and *A Way With Numbers* – both are part of the Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative whose purpose is very relevant to our own activities in helping people to become more competent.

Building on the success of its sponsored programmes to help people into work the Trust has created a new national company – Grand Metropolitan Training Ltd. This initiative will complement existing operations through further development in the provision of training for those people who are in work.

Perhaps the final word should go to Sir Allen Sheppard, our Chairman, who says:

"we are proud of what our Companies and staff have achieved in the communities in which we operate. Much has been done . . . but there is still much to do." ■

Further information on Grand Metropolitan Community Services Trust can be obtained from its Head Office, 64-65 North Road, Brighton BN1 1YD. Telephone: (0273) 570170.

Information

New Publication Catalogue

ALBSU'S new publication catalogue is now available from the Unit, free of charge.

The Further and Higher Education Week: 21st – 27th April 1991

ALBSU is supporting a national week of promotion for all aspects of Further Education, Higher Education and Adult Education. The week has been organised by The Marketing Network, a non-profit making national professional body for people directly involved in marketing education. The aim of the week is to promote the service, breadth and quality of education and training and to celebrate students' successes. Each day of the week has a particular theme.

Thursday, April 25th is 'Adult Basic Skills Day.' It will give practitioners the opportunity to make employers, 'decision makers', potential students and the general public much more aware of the exciting new developments in basic skills such as work with parents, in industry, BSAI and open learning opportunities. Local and regional activities such as open days, exhibitions, displays and celebrity events, free information 'phone-ins' and radio and TV 'Roadshows' are now being organised by most colleges and LEAs. The Marketing Network can be contacted at P.O Box 43, Dagenham, Essex. RM8 2AZ.

New Basic Skills Initiative

In late January Tim Eggar, the Minister of State for Education and Science, announced that about £3,000,000 would be made available to ALBSU between 1991 and 1994 for a new Basic Skills Initiative.

This Initiative, which is jointly funded by the Departments of Education and Science and Employment, is intended to encourage the development of partnerships between LEAs and Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) concerning basic skills training for unemployed people and for employees who want to improve their basic skills.

Photo: Richardson & Son, Co. Durham

Certificate No 9281 – The First Awards

John Barnes, Director General of City and Guilds, presented Jennifer Lee with the Certificate 9281 in Teaching Basic Communication Skills. Jenny, a tutor for the County Durham Basic Education Service. Anne Twizzell of Cleveland and Carol Linton of Cumbria were the first three people to gain this newly developed second level qualification. They all studied for the Certificate through the scheme monitored by the Northern Regional Advisory Council.

The presentation and reception, held at the County Hall Durham, was attended by the Chairman of the Education Committee and senior members of Durham County Council, the Director of Education and senior officers of the Education Department and other guests including representatives of the Regional Advisory Council and ALBSU.

Also awarded with certificates were nine ABE tutors who had gained the Initial Certificate 9282 in Teaching Basic Communication Skills.

Details of these recently developed certificates for people involved in teaching basic skills to adults are available from ALBSU and City and Guilds.

ALBSU – A Change of Status

Some people may already know that ALBSU is about to change its status. The Unit and its predecessors have operated since 1975 as an agency of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) which is based in Leicester.

In 1990 the Secretary of State for Education and Science agreed with ALBSU that it was time to review this arrangement and a number of organisations were asked for their views. It was recognised that ALBSU was no longer a short life national agency and that the Unit had 'come of age'. Furthermore the lack of any clear legal status for an organisation with legal responsibilities created increasing problems.

The government agreed after consultation that ALBSU should become an independent organisation and a registered charity. Our change of status, which should happen by 1 April 1991, does not indicate a significant change. The Education Departments will continue to fund ALBSU on the same basis and we don't intend to become much larger (or smaller). We will also continue to try to have close links with Local Education Authorities and Colleges as well as with the new Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). Our primary aim will be to continue to try to improve the scale and quality of adult literacy and basic skills provision throughout England and Wales.

Some changes will take place, however. ALBSU is to have a new Board of Management which will, as before, include representatives from the major funders and providers in basic skills. Our Chairman, Peter Davis, Chairman and Chief Executive of Reed International PLC, has been asked to continue by the Secretary of State and we are very pleased that he has agreed to continue. His contribution over the last 18 months has been invaluable.

Although ALBSU will no longer be an agency of NIACE both the Unit and NAICE intend to continue to liaise closely and we have already agreed arrangements which will ensure this happens. NIACE has been a supportive 'parent' to ALBSU and our predecessors for more than 15 years and we have been grateful for their support and encouragement.

Photo: Len Once

During International Literacy Year local and regional newspapers were encouraged to run a competition, involving local primary and secondary schools, to design an advertisement for adult literacy.

This was a joint initiative between ALBSU, Northcliffe Newspapers in Education, the Newspaper Society and PressAd Co-op, which also encouraged newspapers to produce supplements on International Literacy Year.

Teresa Kew, whose winning design appeared in a supplement in the Lincolnshire Echo, was presented with a trophy by Lady Plowden and a set of dictionaries, donated by World Book – Childcraft International, by Keith Harcourt of Northcliffe Newspapers Group.

GATESHEAD COLLEGE

Dear Editor,

In the Summer 1990 edition of the magazine you kindly published my enquiry seeking contact with other tutors working with deaf adults, and with particular reference to the Wordpower certificate.

I was delighted by the response, and it was interesting to see how many people are indeed working in isolation. Many expressed an interest in the Wordpower certificate but felt there was little guidance available for tutors to the deaf, especially regarding Unit 5 (Conversation – Using the telephone). Our own Local Assessor has been most interested and supportive and planned to raise some points with City and Guilds on our behalf.

Readers might be interested to know that all four deaf students here at the Adult Education Centre at Gateshead College have passed their course with flying colours and have received their certificates – we wonder if they are the first deaf group to do so? Readers may also have seen the group and tutors working on Wordpower on the BBC1 programme 'See Hear' in February 1990, when we 'demonstrated' a form filling session!

Since they gained their qualification, students have progressed in a variety of ways – one now has a job, one is attending interviews and another is studying at Northumberland College for Arts and Technology and hopes to do GCSE 'O' grades soon. We are very pleased to see their success.

Thanks again for your interest and support.

Yvonne Clark, Tutor, ABE Centre Gateshead; Co-ordinator Gatehouse OL Centre, Hexham; Tutor, Open Door Prudhoe.

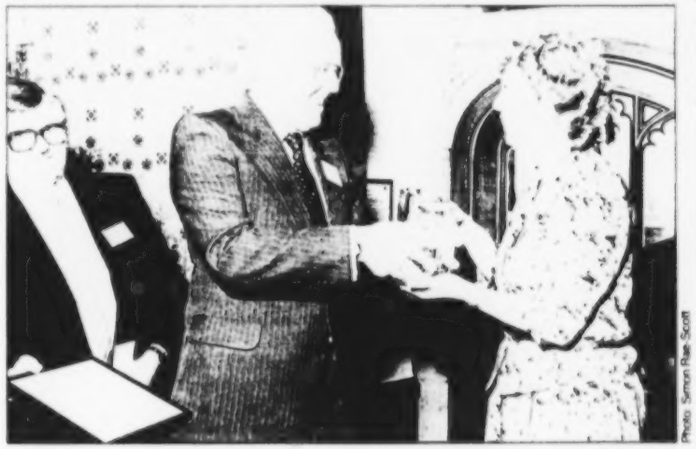


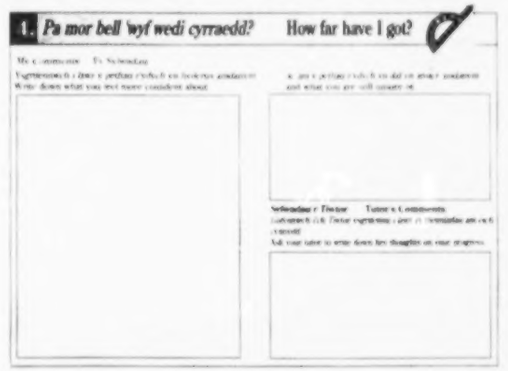
Photo: Simon Rae Scott

The ALBSU Reader, 'Dogs and Roses' by Karen Beggs, has won the 1990 Joseph Rowntree Foundation Award as an outstanding book for adults with learning difficulties.

Karen Beggs received her award from Sir Brian Rix at the launch of the 'Read Easy' Directory at the House of Commons in November 1990.

Gwynedd LEA has produced sets of bilingual Progress Profile forms. Copies are available, at a modest charge, from:

Peter Williams, Principal Youth and Community Officer, Education Dept, County Offices, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 1SH.



THE ROAD TO PROGRESS IN SIBERIA

Dramatic changes are underway in the Soviet Union. In a country where there was a notable campaign in the 1920's to eradicate illiteracy, the fact that, despite universal education, there are still adults with literacy needs has recently been acknowledged. In a remote part of Eastern Siberia the Centre for Popular Education has established basic literacy training, with a clear emphasis on progression and occupational relevance. Dr Antonina Sidorkina, Director of the Centre, traces developments so far.

Changes in Siberia

At the northwest tip of Lake Baikal lies the tiny settlement of Chilchigiri, home of the Evenki tribe. Further along the Upper Angar, two hundred kilometres away, are their cousins, the Kindigiri. These two tribes once led a nomadic life, but soviet power brought farms and factories as well as ships bringing bread, weapons, machines, petrol, kerosene and clothes. The tribes gave up their lives as nomads. Their reindeer, that fed, clothed, warmed, healed and carried them were no longer necessary. Helicopters, motorised sleighs, and outboard motors took their place. Doctors with medicines, food and consumer goods all came to the North, while Russia itself went without. After the revolution fur was much in demand. Subsidies were made available to the Evenkis, which paid for food, clothing and the necessities of life. Education was organised so that children went to one of the three boarding schools in the region.

Then in the 1970s came BAM, the building of the Baikal Amur Motorway. The road passed only a few kilometres away. A new life began. A town called Severo Baikalsk was built. Local people finally gave up their old way of life, but they didn't adjust to new life styles. Most of the Evenkis who went to the Institute for the Northern Peoples of Leningrad did not return to the area. Life was better in the cities. There were 5 Evenki tutors for the entire 700 kilometre area within which the Evenkis lived.

BAM brought many other people – Uzbeks, Georgians, Moldavians and Ukrainians. In 15 years the population increased thirty fold. With BAM came electricity, TV and radio. Life became easier and more secure. The BAM workers built houses, a social club and a school for the local people. Qualified teachers arrived. For adults there were new areas of work. Small enterprises were started – clothing and footwear workshops, and the fur trade. Local herbal remedies were mass produced.

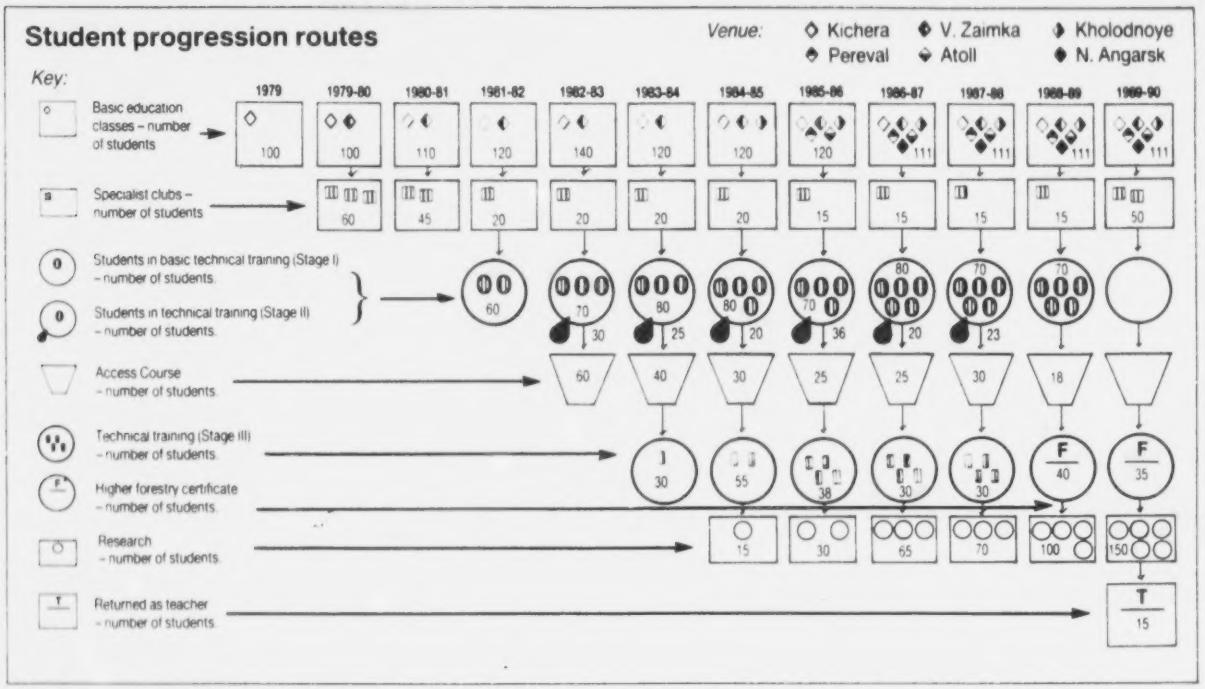
Introducing basic education and training

With the arrival of BAM it became necessary to provide education for adults. Teachers were brought in from the nearest town, Kichera, and all those adults who had given up school early gathered in the village soviet building. They started with the alphabet and basic arithmetic. Then they moved on to technical training.

Nikolai Tulbukov had been a hunter, but had been badly mauled by a bear on an expedition. He had to find other work. He went back to school at 30, taking his children with him. He was then taken on for technical training, having sat for the exams with his basic skills teachers. He is now finishing his training as a mechanic.

Almost all those attending classes at the soviet continue to serve other forms of training.

One problem with this was distance: it's 600 kilometres to the nearest town, Kichera. However, the teachers successfully negotiated with the Technical and Academic Institutes in Kichera to allow exams to be set locally, tutorials to be given and for specialist tutors to travel from Kichera during the first two years of the course. After that further study took place on a block basis, in the town itself.



Anya Aksenova came to work on BAM at the age of 17, straight after leaving school. She married and had three children. Her husband was a success in his career and became a Hero of Socialist Labour. It became difficult and shameful for her to remain without skills or education. So she started adult training. She successfully finished foundation courses, progressed to further training, and got a job in an accounts department. Then, when her children were older, she was able to commute by air to an institute of economics: she is now an accountant for a construction firm.

Much work is done on study skills at the CPE, in order to prepare students for technical or higher education. This is to make it easier for students to continue their courses and not drop out, as had happened previously. And so from tarmac layers, drivers, loggers, plasterers, hostel cooks and cleaners, "grow" fitters, accountants, nursery workers, railway technicians and managers. Far fewer people leave the area now, particularly those with families.

Provision is also made at the Centre for Popular Education for the children of students. In the youth club children are taught to cook, sew and do household repairs. Many have time to come to evening provision after school, for social reasons, and to help teach adults and other children.

Among the work-brigades

The Centre also works with workers on the BAM construction site. A separate school for literacy has been established on the BAM site. From an initial group of 15 employees, wishing to receive education to a secondary level (17), the provision grew. Of 400 workers aged between 18-35 in one section, 100 have had basic educational support at the school. There is no school building: teaching takes place in red corners (TU/Communist Party rooms); tents, hostels, canteens and managers' offices. Other staff take on a teaching role.

As BAM has progressed the school has worked on other sites: Verkhnaya Zaimka, Kholodnoye, Angoya, Baikalskoe and Lower Angarsk. At first the lessons were evening only, from 9.00pm – 12.30am. The course has now been reorganised, at the suggestion of the students, into blocks, that fit into shifts, of four daytime sessions in 10 days. Work is tailored to the individual students, as they arrive in class with different levels of education. The traditional Soviet marking system (of 2-5) is not used.

Students are encouraged to take up courses at one of the Technological Institutes. Others join special interest 'clubs' organised either to promote cultural or social learning – for example 'Soviet Literature' or 'Looking after a new born baby'.

Progression

The above chart demonstrates the emphasis that teachers of literacy place on moving on to further education and training.

Conclusion

The construction of the Baikal Amur Motorway is the largest capital project currently underway in the Soviet Union. Its arrival has changed the lives of people in the region, and of people who have been involved in its construction. But the construction of the road will end; and new lives will begin for both native inhabitants and new arrivals. The task of the Centre for Popular Education is to bring about a perestroika in the education and training of adults and young people in Severo Baikalsk, by laying firm foundations in literacy and numeracy. ■

TEACHING VISUALLY HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

Robert Hesketh, Literacy & Numeracy tutor at the RNIB Employment Rehabilitation Centre, Manor House, Torquay, sets out practical information on working with visually handicapped students.

What is visual handicap?

The vast majority of visually handicapped people have useful sight. The degree of sight varies greatly. Some are able to read newsprint, whilst others need large print of varying sizes. A minority rely on non-sighted methods of reading and writing, such as braille, touch typing and moon.

As there are scores of different eye complaints the type of partial sight students may have varies. It is therefore essential to establish a student's degree of useful vision, what lighting conditions suit him and what methods he uses for reading and writing, before starting a teaching programme.

In broad terms, some students suffer from poor visual acuity, some from a loss of visual field. Many suffer from a loss of both acuity and field.

Students referred to you by the RNIB should have been assessed in these areas already and referrals will contain appropriate notes.

Visual handicap, literacy and numeracy

In general, visual handicap results in a complex of literacy and numeracy problems. All reading and writing tasks are made slower and harder by visual loss. Some of the most common literacy and numeracy problems visually impaired people may have are listed below:

1. Lack of reading, writing and numeracy practice.
2. Difficulties in scanning pages, or even in scanning words.
3. A cumulative 'falling behind' in education.

Making a start

It is of great help to a visually handicapped person if you introduce yourself by name every time you meet. Please address your words directly to him and not to a sighted companion.

When he arrives in your teaching area he will appreciate a guided tour – which may involve pointing out things like fire exits which are patently obvious to you! If he needs 'sighted guide' simply ask him to hold your arm just above the elbow, walk slowly and explain obstacles in advance.

A useful preliminary enquiry is whether or not the student has (a) brought his spectacles (if he has any) and (b) whether he has visited his optician recently.

Working techniques

Visual Working Methods

Some of the methods detailed below require specialised equipment. The first ones listed are all 'low tech' and could be applied almost anywhere.

Contrast and Enlargement

A high contrast between ink and paper and/or enlargement are the keys to most of the aids and techniques listed below.

Pens

Many visually handicapped students rely on felt tipped pens or marker pens for handwriting. If they have enough sight to use a biro, one which gives a thick black line would be appreciated.

Paper

The Partially Sighted Society sells thick lined paper in three grades. This paper can make all the difference to many students. (Tutors can make their own thick lined paper with a felt tipped pen and a ruler. Sheets can be photocopied).

Writing Frames

Writing frames enable people who do not have enough sight to read their own writing, or to follow a straight line with a pen, to produce legible handwriting. A variety of cheap frames are available through RNIB and can be used effectively, even by totally blind students.

Large Print Books

The main suppliers of these books are Ulverscroft, Anstey, Leicestershire and Isis Longman, 55 St Thomas Street, Oxford OX1 1JG. The large print dictionaries and thesaurus are especially useful.

Lighting

The quality of lighting can make a crucial difference to a person using his residual vision effectively. Eye conditions vary greatly and some students want bright lighting, others fairly subdued lighting. Angle poise lamps and natural light usually provide the best combination.

Print it Bigger

A range of large print teaching materials are available from the Partially Sighted Society and the RNIB's Basic Skills Service.

Most photocopiers will enlarge, but at the cost of print quality. All the same they are of immense value to teachers of the visually handicapped.

Reading Stands

Many visually handicapped people need to bring their work very close to their eyes. A reading stand can alleviate fatigue.

Practice with Low Vision Aids

Students who possess low vision aids, such as magnifiers, should be encouraged to use them in order to get the best from them. If your student doesn't have an aid, suggest visiting a low vision aid clinic for an assessment.

Closed Circuit Television

CCTVs are expensive low vision aids, but are available from some libraries and resource centres as well as Visionaid Systems (see references).

Large Print Typefaces and Large Print Word Processing Packages

A large print daisywheel printer and a good ribbon make a great difference.

Some large print word processing packages, Folio and HAL for example, will display large print on the word processor's screen.

Non-visual Working Methods

Touch Typing

Touch typing is a most useful skill for computer users and writers, particularly those with a visual handicap.

Speech Synthesisers

Dolphin Systems of PO Box 83, Worcester WR1 2RN supply speech synthesisers with the OPUS computer. The Vincent workstation, which uses a BBC computer, also uses a speech synthesiser.

Talking Calculators

At £60 these are affordable for some individuals and greatly extend the range of maths visually impaired people can accomplish without resort to braille.

Tape Recorders

Tape recorders have a great many uses for visually impaired students. These are a few suggestions: sending taped letters to friends, listening to taped library books, making notes in class, listening to notes prepared by a tutor, listening to talking newspapers and talking books (see references).

A tiny cassette recorder, called a pocket memo, is used by many visually handicapped people for keeping shopping lists and telephone numbers – it is, of course, adaptable for all the above uses too.

Tactile Methods

Raised line writing can be produced with the Sewell writing kit, available from the Sewell EP Corp., Woodside, New York, New York 11377.

Braille

Braille is a reading and writing system in which raised dots, arranged in configurations of six, represent letters, numbers and abbreviated words. Only 7% of registered blind people use braille, so it is by no means a pre-requisite that teachers of the visually handicapped know braille. A student wishing to learn braille should either contact his local social services or the RNIB.

Moon

Moon is a simpler concept than braille. It is a system of raised symbols based on the Roman alphabet.

References

Partially Sighted Society,
Queen's Road, Doncaster,
Yorkshire DN1 2NX. Tel: 0302 68998
Large print, thick lined paper and enlarging.

Royal National Institute for the Blind,
224 Great Portland Street,
London W1A 6AA. Tel: 01 388 1266.
General enquiries and equipment.

RNIB Resource Center,
Bakewell Road, Orton Southgate,
Peterborough, Cambs PE2 0XU
Tel: 0703 370777

Basic Education and Skills Service,
RNIB Vocational College,
Radmoor Road, Loughborough,
Leicestershire LE11 3BS
Tel: 0509 611077

Visionaid Systems,
The Old School, The Green, Ruddington, Notts
NG11 6HH.
Tel: 0602 897879

British Talking Book Services,
Mount Pleasant, Alperton, Wembley,
Middlesex HA0 1RR.

Talking Newspaper Association,
90a High Street, Heathfield,
East Sussex TN21 8JD
Tel: 04352 6102

Mandy McMahon

Mandy McMahon died suddenly on Christmas Day, after a short illness. She was born on January 13 1943 in Dixon, Illinois.

In 1970 Mandy started her teaching career in Bradford as a part-time general studies lecturer, frequently filling the Friday afternoon slot – that most favoured time to work with day-release printers, many of whom may still be puzzling the educational value of some of their exploits. In 1974 she was appointed as an Adult Education Fieldworker and, in 1976, became lecturer in Continuing Education.

Mandy's background was one of high achievement: in the States, it included winning the United Daughters of the Confederacy essay competition as well as a National Merit Scholarship from 1961-65. In 1965 she was awarded a BA in Anthropology from Cornell University; her studies there included a field study programme on the role of women in community activities in a Peruvian village. In 1969 a study of friendship networks brought her to England; marriage was the initial inducement to stay. In November 1990, Mandy was conferred her doctorate from Sheffield Polytechnic for her study on management teams in adult education. High achievement continued – after her viva, the examiner said she had probably done enough work for two Ph.Ds.

Mandy's energy, enthusiasm and quick-thinking were often startling to those meeting her for the first time. In our northern English setting she perhaps appeared quintessentially American – though I can vouch for the fact that, when you put her alongside 'real' Americans, as we did at a conference in Dundee, she was in fact quite anglicised. Not every one found her style congenial, but I believe everyone would acknowledge her hard work and energy.

Mandy's work in ABE was wide-ranging. First and foremost she was always a classroom practitioner. Within Bradford and Ilkley Community College she was also involved in Academic board and many other college committees; she was involved in regional training, assessing for the RSA Certificate in Continuing Education and a mentor for the C&G Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills. She was involved in the setting up of ABESS, NATFHE's basic education subject section; she was the treasurer for Bradford Literacy Group and for the Association for Recurrent Educaton; she was a founding member and treasurer of Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL), a collaborative collective of researchers and practitioners which brings out a research bulletin three times a year and organises national research conferences.

Mandy's life has touched the lives of many others: friends, students, volunteer tutors, part-time and full-time colleagues, administrators, ABE fieldworkers, regional and national ABE practitioners. Many will remember her kindness and thoughtfulness. Many will remember her inspiration, humour and energy. For most of us, she will leave a space in our lives which is hard to fill.

Sally Murphy
Literacy Organiser
Bradford & Ilkley Community College

REVIEWS

Practical Help with Reading, Writing and Number

By CTAD

Published by NEC/CTAD

Available from NEC, 18 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 2NH

Price: £45.00 + 6.5% handling charge if invoice required

ISBN 0 86082 8476

Practical Help with Reading, Writing and Number is a joint production from the National Extension College and Cambridge Training and Development Ltd. A white plastic pocket folder contains a ringbound workbook in three parts designed to help supervisors help employees with confidence building and work related basic skills. It is, essentially, a supervisor's resource pack.

The first part of the workbook is full of easily accessible ideas (both in language and design) to help build confidence. They are time saving ideas for overstretched supervisors to 'provide short cuts or alternative approaches to tasks to get them done more efficiently'.

The ideas are mainly presented in a two page format, one page describing the idea and the other giving examples of putting the ideas into practice with employees (described throughout as 'your people' or 'the person you are working with').

There are ten ideas in this section and they seem to me, without having actually used them with workplace supervisors, to be an invaluable resource.

The second section in the work book is 'skill-builder' and covers reading, writing and number skills common to work related problems. This section has the same two page layout, with the left hand side containing instructions for the supervisor, and the right hand side showing the supervisor how to use it to help the employee to work in small steps towards building up skills e.g. using multiplication, including what it's about, who it's for and what you do, followed by a guide to three resources for the employee/student – how to use simple multiplication square, a square for a specific purpose, a calculator or even the pen and paper model.

I did have some doubts in the skills section about a supervisor's level of knowledge to teach these basic skills, but this may have been arrogance on my part. I certainly think this section would be useful for a basic skills worker acting in conjunction with a supervisor.

To help the supervisor use the pack better, there are also two separate guides in the folder; one for supervisors using the Workbook and one for Training Organisers. The one for Training Organisers is designed to give information about workplace basic skills to companies, supervisors and employees and is, therefore, complementary to the reading matter produced by, for example, Workbase.

The pack itself, or at least my version of it, gave no external indication as to what or who it is for and it would probably market better with a separate description on the back of the folder. It was strangely coincidental for me that I had been asked to review this pack as it was only when I began to read it that I realised it was about work related basic skills – an area that my college had been keen for me to find out more about. I recommend it.

Basil Wild
Open Learning Development Worker
Somerset

Literacy and Power
The Latin American Battleground

by David Archer/Patrick Costello

Published by Earthscan Publications London, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD

Price: £8.95 + £1.00 p&p

ISBN 1 85383 0429

This book outlines some of the developments in Popular Education in Latin America. Previously, anything documented about the area has been from the standpoint of education planners and providers. What is significant and interesting about this book is that the authors have spent time in urban neighbourhoods, remote rural areas and refugee camps and have been able to assess with the learners the impact of the literacy programmes on their communities.

Many literacy workers have at times felt uneasy about basic skills being part of an education system which has already failed some of its potential students. The authors visited a number of Latin American countries and found in each communities developing their own methods of establishing popular education programmes.

The National Rural Workers Congress in Honduras promoted literacy through their own radio programmes and primers. In Chile, great use was made of television, learners became empowered by making their own videos. One student explained, 'by making videos we could use our own words, our own language, our own way of seeing.' El Salvadoreans in a refugee camp in Honduras provided each other with a balanced education, 'useful to its pupils and intimately related to their lives'.

A fascinating and challenging book, one I would recommend to anyone interested in literacy beyond the Language Experience Approach.

Andrea Mearing
County Co-ordinator for
Adult Basic Education
Norfolk Education Authority

Relearning Mathematics – Volume 1

by Marilyn Frankenstein

Published by Free Association Books

ISBN 1 85343 091 9

Price: £12.95 + £1.30 p&p

Available from Free Association Books, 26 Freegrove Road, London N7 9RQ or from major booksellers.

This book is volume one of a set of two, unfortunately I have not seen the second volume so cannot comment on how the two would work together or how well one follows on from the other. The two books are meant to give students a second chance to learn mathematics by getting rid of maths anxiety and showing them that they already know quite a lot.

Volume one is in two parts, the first focuses on overcoming anxiety by giving tips on how to use the book, using a calculator, keeping a maths journal and working with other students. The second part looks at the meaning of many mathematical concepts such as whole numbers, fractions, decimals, directed numbers and even touches on the basics of algebra. The author admits that it may seem a harder way to learn as there is a lot of reading and writing involved.

and the student is asked to create problems as well as solve them.

The main problem with this book is, as the author admits, all the reading and writing required. It is extremely wordy and calls for the student to have excellent reading skills. This could deny access to many of our students. Also, the book was written for American students and contains a lot of American statistical tables – not very relevant for our students.

In the book's favour, for those who could cope with the mass of print, each section is laid out well with worked examples, followed by questions which are self correcting, with answers and explanations at the end of each chapter. There are also many useful ideas and examples of work for tutors to adapt for students for whom the text would be too difficult.

I enjoyed reading the book and will certainly use some of her work with students. I do feel, however, that most students would find the mass of print hard to cope with and the language difficult. I would therefore not recommend this book for use with the majority of students in basic education.

Liza Prickett
Project Officer
Dyfed Open Learning Centre
Dyfed Education Authority

Microcomputer Review

Where Do Words Come From?

produced by Tony Droar, Chichester College Software

Available From: Chichester College of Technology, Westgate Fields, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1SB

Price: £45.00 + VAT where applicable

Microcomputer: IBM with 512K memory and CAG graphics

'Where Do Words Come From?' is one of a number of programs in a Basic Skills series. This package is designed to enhance word familiarity, explain key developments of the English language and enable the student to test their recognition of word origins.

The programme is presented in three parts: an introduction, a map and a quiz, each accessed through a screen menu.

The introduction informs us that before Roman Times, Celts used words such as drudge, glen, dam, pool and mug; four of these examples appear in corners of a rectangle, with the fifth word landing neatly in the centre. A Celt then slowly materialises at the bottom of the screen. This format continues through the invasion by the Romans, Angles, Saxons and Jutes, Vikings and Normans, each bringing a few words (the same words each time the programme is run) accompanied by a gaudy graphic. And that, presumably, explains the key developments of the English language.

The map section invites the user to select a word from a given list to be shown its origin on a map of Europe. There is an option to select more words, but the apparently endless list is always presented in the same order, with no word-searching facilities.

The quiz is a test on the origin of words. Words are written one by one on a blackboard and easel. A correct answer is rewarded with a picture (Viking, Norman, etc); a wrong one is simply corrected. The entire quiz is presented in exactly the same order as the word-lists in the map section.

This program is intended to be used in conjunction with other teaching methods, which is just as well, as it stands, 'Where Do Words Come From?' might leave you thinking that words float out of thin air on the back of a colourful caricature!

Freda Hollin
Project Co-ordinator
ALBSU Special Development Project supporting the use of computers in ABE and ESOL

Write on Sam

by Sam

Published and available from the Belfast Centre for the Unemployed, 45/47 Donegall Street, Belfast, BT1 2FG

Price: £1.00 + 22p p&p

This booklet contains two short stories written by a literacy student at the Belfast Centre for the Unemployed. The first story, 'Work Crazy', recently won first prize in a Literacy Competition on local radio. Both stories are, I imagine, written from first-hand experience and are full of local colour. The first one is about a young man's first day at work as a labourer after a period of unemployment and the second one describes the unfortunate occurrences (a drunken brawl) which lead to Sam's imprisonment.

Sam includes a lot of dialogue in his writing which makes it very immediate and fast-moving. He sets the scene at the beginning of each story with a short descriptive paragraph which then enables him to write a snappy exciting piece of action.

My main criticism would be the colour of the cover, which doesn't echo the quality of the writing inside.

Overall, I found this book very humorous and good fun to read, with some lovely use of language. I think that, for anyone who might be daunted by too much text, this is an ideal book. It will give other students some hope of achievement, both in reading and writing their own stories. I think Sam should write more.

Karen Beggs
Educational Therapist,
University Hospital School
Nottingham Education Authority

You Can Do It Billy

by Billy Armstrong

Published and available from the Belfast Centre for the Unemployed, 45/47 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2FG

Price: £3.50

This book was published with the help of the Belfast Centre for the Unemployed, Belfast Action Team and Shankill Leisure Centre. That in itself gives some of the strong sense of community that pervades this book. Conversely, there is also the sense of two communities purposelessly at war.

Billy Armstrong describes his background in troubled Belfast, where petty crime is the norm and beating 'the authorities' seems to be paramount in most young people's minds. There are some hilarious incidents described and Billy obviously had a very exciting time before his tragic accident.

Billy's accident seems inevitable as his escapades escalate. He describes his nightmarish recovery from coma and his subsequent attempts to return to normal life.

For someone who has never written before, this is a remarkable book. However, for the reader, the story-line is sometimes confusing, as sections of the book are more suitable as vignettes of Belfast life rather than as part of a continuing story.

The section of the book which relates the trauma of Billy's accident is very moving. I feel this would have greater impact if published to stand on its own, and would be of therapeutic value to patients who have suffered in similar fashion and also to medical and rehabilitation staff.

I think the book is rather too long and difficult for most literacy students, although I think sections of the book would be extremely valuable and 'a good read' if published separately. Overall it is a powerful book and a remarkable achievement in personal testimony for Billy Armstrong, and the book's humour and positive attitude are encapsulated in the title, 'You Can Do It Billy'.

Karen Beggs
Educational Therapist,
University Hospital School
Nottingham Education Authority

The Special Olympics
by Graham Bartlett
Price: £1.50
ISBN 1 872617 35 2

My Christmas Love
by Donald Hudson
Price: £1.50
ISBN 1 872617 20 4

Oh What A Day
by Betty Wesley
Price: £1.50
ISBN 1 872617 25 5

S'funny How You Never Laugh At The Time Though Innit?
by John Wright
Price: £3.00
ISBN 1 872617 15 8

All four books are written by literacy students and published by Leicestershire ABE. Available from Information Training Centre, Cort Crescent, Braunstone, Leicester, LE3 1QY.

Graham Bartlett took part in the 'Special' Olympics at Leicester in 1989. Here he records his memories of the occasion. The book is produced in the form of a photograph album with black-and-white photos on every page and Graham's comments in well-spaced heavy type.

Donald Hudson's family at play made the tower of babel seem like a meditation evening'. He tells the story of how, years ago, he introduced his girl-friend to his family, gathered together for Christmas. He well conveys the awe she must have felt but brings the story to a happy conclusion.

Betty Wesley packs a lot of incidents into one short book. She recalls living in a Glasgow slum and escaping once a month to read the Bible to old Mrs Paisley. Mrs Paisley is a well-to-do: she even had a room with a bath in it'. She remembers a disastrous visit to the cinema with Mrs Paisley's grandson, who 'looked like a crushed wingnut'. The story ends with an accusation of vandalism which makes Betty Wesley glad to get back to her old slum.

By far the longest book of the four, S'funny How You Never Laugh At The Time Though Innit?' is the colloquial and frank account of John Wright's life until a brain haemorrhage and his subsequent slow recovery. Johnny Wright's sociable personality comes over well as he tells the story of some of the tragic events in his life as well as amusing accounts of the scrapes he got into. Many students will find him most congenial company.

Leicestershire ABE have published these four very different books suitable for students who have moved beyond the beginning stages of reading but who need practice in reading and stimulus for their own writing. This series is an excellent example of what can be produced by the students themselves and it is an inspiration for other centres to follow suit.

Beric Raymond-Barker
Area Co-ordinator
Cornwall Education Authority

Also Received

Further Skills You Need
by H.M. Dobson
Published by Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., Nelson House, Mayfield Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.
Price £6.15
ISBN 0 17 433393 5

Images
by Gaynor Ramsey
Published by Longman
Price £3.25
ISBN 0 582 74407 5

Accreditation Modules for Adult Basic Education
by Sheila Bowyer
Published by Leeds City Council Printing and Publishing Unit.
Price £6.50
ISBN 1 85659 079 8

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in November, February, May and July. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor, at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic education.

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA. Tel: 071-405 4017.

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NEWSLETTER

ALBSU

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

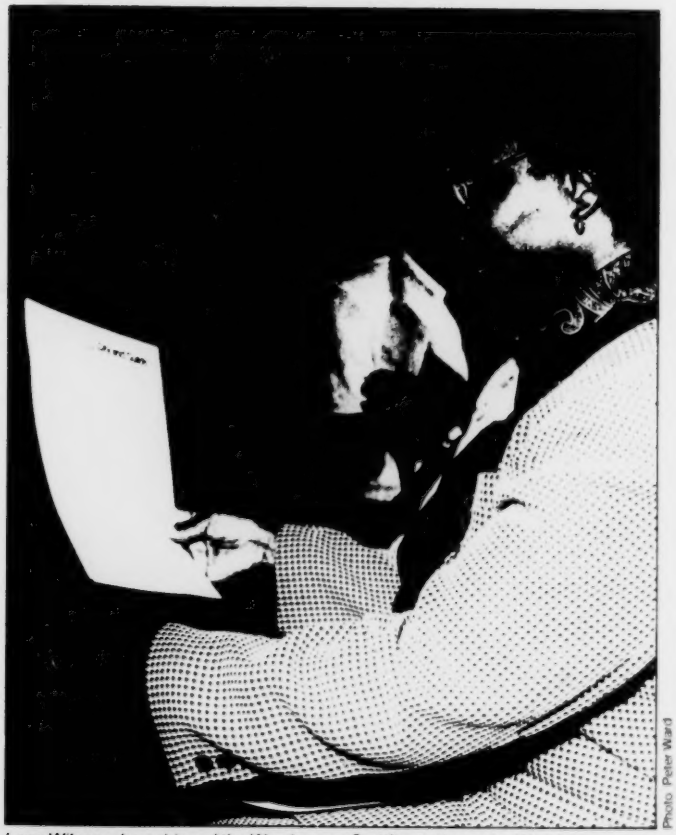

Photo: Peter Ward

Lena Wilson who achieved the Wordpower Certificate through a Workbase course (see page 9).

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CHANGING STRUCTURES – SAME NEEDS

Two major changes have taken place in the organisation of post-school education and training which affect basic skills and ESOL provision. One of these changes – the development of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) to take responsibility for vocational and occupational training – was announced some time ago although the effect of this change is only becoming apparent now. The second major change – central funding of colleges of further education and the removal of colleges from LEA control – has only just been announced and it is still not clear what the effect will be on basic skills and ESOL.

Government recognition of the importance of basic skills (we still have more to do to convince them of the importance of ESOL) has been long-standing and Ministers have been consistent about the need for basic skills provision and have supported staunchly the work of ALBSU.

This recognition is from more than one Government Department and crosses narrow Party political considerations. It has been matched locally in many places, by considerable political commitment from Local Education Authorities, of different political persuasions. We would not pretend that basic skills and ESOL is the main subject on the agenda of Ministers and LEA Education Committees, but there has been an increase in understanding of how basic skills and ESOL needs can be met most effectively.

There is also much wider understanding of the diversity of basic skills and ESOL and a diminishing number of people who believe that opportunities can be delivered on the cheap through a reliance on unsupported volunteers and the goodwill of a few poorly paid part-time staff. Nor do we hear, at least quite so often, basic skills students described as 'illiterate' or ESOL students described as 'foreigners'. While these developments are welcome it would be foolish to pretend that knowledge and understanding is universal. Some LEAs (again of different political persuasions) have done little to develop adequate basic skills and ESOL services and provide little more now than in the mid-1970s. Furthermore, the quality of what is provided in these areas seems to be less of an issue than whether it is possible to 'window dress' at the least possible cost. One of the most distressing experiences is referring a potential student to an LEA where you are sure that the quality of provision will be entirely inadequate.

FUNDING BASIC SKILLS AND ESOL

The funding base for basic skills and ESOL provision is still minimal despite greater commitment, although resources have increased in most areas in the last few years. In some places there is some work still to be done to ensure that people taking financial decisions, particularly at a time when resources are scarce and under pressure, understand the crucial nature of essential areas of post school education and training – such as basic skills, ESOL and special needs. Still, all too often, the 'seamless robe' of adult education is used as an excuse to treat every area of work as of equal value. ALBSU is unequivocal about this. We believe that whilst 'demand' and the 'market' can operate effectively in some areas of adult education, basic skills and ESOL must be 'needs-led', rather than demand led, if the unfair discrimination in the education system is not to be continued post school. Basic skills and ESOL provision is critical for both individuals and for society as a whole. The suggestion that all adult education and basic skills and ESOL are of equal importance really does not stand up to scrutiny.

The funding of basic skills and ESOL should be through an identified and specific budget. Neither service is an income generator – nor should they be – and without a specific budget they will disappear in the rush to bring in money. We know that some managers and administrators do not like specific and protected budgets for particular areas of activity and prefer an un-earmarked budget which they can allocate according to perceived priorities and need. We don't believe that this is the most effective way of funding basic skills (and to a lesser extent ESOL which is largely centrally funded through the specific Section 11 Grant); nor does it produce the scale of resources which is needed. In fact what often happens is that 'profit' from other adult education courses is used to fund basic skills. Whilst this is commendable individually, it is not the right approach in the longer term. The cost of basic skills provision should be borne by all tax and Community Charge payers rather than by a small group of people who go to adult education classes. A service based on variable income from other unrelated activities is extremely vulnerable. Furthermore, expenditure and income on general adult education is so small that even if half the budget was allocated for basic skills provision, the scale of what was available would still be very limited.

> *"ALBSU must be given great credit for its achievement in pushing basic skills up the agenda. It has also been effective in getting basic skills on everyone's agenda. Employers now recognise that they have an important contribution to make in improving the skills of their employees, and are ideally placed to do so. Training in the workplace is becoming more attractive to employees."*
>
> TIMOTHY EGGAR MP
> Minister of State, Education & Science, speaking at ALBSU's Conference for TECs, 14 March 1991.

POSITIVE ACTION

Positive action is needed in relation to these crucial and essential areas of post-school education and training. Positive action means recognising the crucial nature of basic skills and ESOL and treating these areas differently from other desirable, but frankly less than essential, education opportunities. For example, basic skills

and ESOL tuition should be free of charge to the individual through local and central government funding, in much the same way as higher education is free of charge to all students. Even low fees deter poor people (and the link between poverty and poor basic skills is well proven) and there is no evidence that where fees are charged students either appreciate the opportunity more or that fewer students drop out.

It is not our job to suggest how general adult and further education should operate or be funded, except in so far as it relates to basic skills and ESOL. Most people want a well resourced, wide ranging, efficient and effective post-school education service. Most would like a service which is rather more coherent than the present complicated system which unnecessarily confuses many potential students. Basic skills and ESOL should be key parts of all further and adult education, as well as of vocational and occupational training for young people and adults. Greater effort is, also, needed to include elements of basic skills in the work of voluntary organisations and ALBSU's new Voluntary Organisation Grants Programme aims to help this develop.

The proposed change in the funding of further education colleges will undoubtedly have an effect on basic skills work. Central funding of colleges will mean that it is possible to include basic skills as a priority in the funding arrangements for colleges. Government will need to ensure that central funding of basic skills is logical and effective and that a simplistic formula based only on quantity and ignoring quality is not adopted. ALBSU believes that further education colleges have a major role to play in making basic skills and ESOL provision available both in the college and in the wider community. The move by many colleges of further education to become genuine community colleges would bring greater coherence to the system, enhance progression and release often under used resources. All basic skills and ESOL provision should not, however, be based in often off-putting college buildings and most colleges acknowledge the need to provide in the community. Good community based provision already exists in many colleges of further education and this needs to be a central part of the pattern for the future.

Central funding of colleges makes it logical to give the *primary* responsibility for funding basic skills to the new Further Education Funding Council and the *primary* responsibility for basic skills and ESOL provision to FE colleges. Certainly ALBSU intends to continue working closely with colleges as well as developing a close working relationship with the Further Education Funding Council, particularly as central funding may provide a 'window of opportunity' to provide the scale of resources which would lead to the development of a wide-ranging, accessible basic skills and ESOL service.

> *"In this environment, the development of a skilled, motivated and, above all, versatile workforce is a key factor in determining who thrives, who survives, and who does neither. Basic skills must be part of any strategy for Human Resource Development – nationally, locally and for each individual company."*
>
> VISCOUNT ULLSWATER
>
> Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Employment Department, speaking at the "Better Basic Skills – Better Work" event for employers in Birmingham, 8 March 1991

WORKING WITH TECs

ALBSU has recently published a Basic Skills Guide for TECs as well as held a Conference to launch the Guide and publicise the new 'Basic Skills at Work' Programme. There is considerable interest in TECs in basic skills and ESOL training and we hope that ALBSU initiatives will help TECs, in partnership with local basic skills and ESOL providers, develop high quality training for people, unemployed and in work, who want to improve basic skills and English Language. Many TECs are already aware of the range of different training needs, as well as concerned about the danger of concentrating on short-term expediency at the expense of longer term objectives. Too often in the UK training has been training for the past, too rarely training for the present and almost never training for the future. Unless this cycle can be broken, we will find it difficult to compete, with a skilled workforce, with our rather more farsighted competitors.

TECs have difficult economic choices to make particularly as budgets are limited. One positive action in making choices might be to stop using the collective term 'special training needs' as though this includes a homogeneous group of people, particularly as it confuses basic skills and ESOL training needs with wider 'special needs' and does little to distinguish between very different needs. There is a considerable difference between the needs of people who have been failed by the education system and need help to improve core communication and numerical skills, those of people who were not educated in the UK and need to be able to communicate effectively in English and those of people who need extended, wide-ranging education and training post-school because of a particular learning difficulty or disability. Hopefully, TECs will have increasing local flexibility and the length and type of training will be more closely based on the needs of the individual and the existing and emerging job market in the area rather than a standard amount of training time.

We know that some people need intensive, vocationally related basic skills and language training in order to be able to benefit from any occupational training, whilst others require a relatively intensive and speedy opportunity to brush up 'rusty' skills, often through a mixture of open learning, basic skills support and occupational training.

APPROPRIATE OUTCOMES

We were encouraged that the Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science, Tim Eggar, agreed at ALBSU's TECs Conference to take up the suitability of 'Wordpower' and 'Numberpower' as recognised outcomes of training for some adults and young people. Whilst neither of these are National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) as such, they use the same type of competence framework and were developed by ALBSU, the BBC, the DES and the Employment Department to fill the pre-NVQ gap. Both are precursors for many unskilled people to NVQs, as well as a 'bridge' from the Attainment Targets of the National Curriculum. (ALBSU is publishing guidance on equivalence with the National Curriculum later in the year.) If NVQs are the only acceptable outcome for funding training, large numbers of people will miss out altogether because it will take them too long to achieve the level demanded for an NVQ. This is shortsighted and wasteful.

ALBSU is not suggesting a 'soft option' for all unemployed people on government funded training programmes; nor are we against relating funding to outcomes rather than numbers. We also acknowledge that a method of assessing whether a trainee should be taking 'Wordpower' or 'Numberpower' or an NVQ is needed if the system is to avoid being abused and we are publishing a 'Basic Skills Assessment Programme' related to the competences in 'Wordpower' and 'Numberpower' later this year.

CONCLUSION

The financial climate means that choices will have to be made in post-school education and training. We make no excuses for arguing that basic skills and ESOL education and training should be seen as one of the highest priorities and should be treated rather differently from some other areas of adult and further education. Communication and numerical skills are the key 'gateway' skills in our society and without mastery of these skills the individual is severely disadvantaged. Furthermore, society needs fluent, literate and numerate citizens for both social and economic development. The development of basic skills and ESOL in recent years, however welcome has not led to the scale or quality of provision which a highly developed, industrial society needs in the last decade of the Twentieth Century. The structures of education and training may change; the need and its urgency have not. ■

BOXING CLEVER

How can the television programmes associated with Numberpower be used in teaching and training sessions? Pat Hulin, Education Officer with the BBC, offers some ideas.

Over the last year you may have diligently recorded the BBC programmes – *Stepping Up*, *Step Up to Wordpower*, *Sum Chance* and *A Way with Numbers*. But now they are on the shelf what next? How can you use them effectively in your teaching/training? What can they offer that's worth the bother of booking the room, setting the video etc. Many tutors often find that when they consider using the series in their teaching, although the programmes are directly related to a current topic, they are not in a structure they can immediately use with trainees or students. The series have been made as general broadcast material designed for the home viewer which is very different from a mediated viewing with a group or an individual. When planning to use pre-recorded material it has to be used as selectively as any other source material. The video material must be carefully selected, introduced and follow-on activities designed to develop the planned learning outcomes.

"It's amazing how the programmes always seem to pick and reinforce a point we have just made. I am really pleased with them."

Using Video

The activities suggested by tutors in Figures 1 and 2 for *A Way With Numbers* show that a range of activities can develop from just one short clip. The way you use the programmes and the activities that develop from the viewing will depend on the interest and needs of the individuals and the structure of the groups you are working with. With the extra organisational problems involved in using television in the classroom it is important to be sure that the programme shows or teaches something that could not be done by other means. What clips to use, how it fits into a session, what learning outcomes to expect, how to prepare the students – what questions to ask, what aspects to suggest they think about and look out for while they watch are all important considerations to make when planning to use television as well as developing follow on activities.

Practical Points to Remember When Using a Video

- Select and set the video tape to start at the precise clip you are using
- Check that the picture and sound reproduction is high quality before session starts
- Make absolutely sure the television can be seen by everyone
- Plan the session carefully to incorporate the video
- Devise follow on activities and materials to develop the learning outcomes

A Way With Numbers

The instructional *A Way with Numbers* series has been designed to offer a very broad context for numeracy/maths learning. The structure includes real life contexts, historical interest sequences, formal calculation methods, handy tips and back of envelope methods. A 25 minute programme is usually much too long for a group viewing but by selecting relevant clips different parts can be used for different purposes. The real life contexts may be just that example you wanted, to show how maths relates to real life; the historical sequence may spark off an interest in the broad context and cultural background of mathematics; the handy tip may help someone with a difficult concept. The element of surprise in the programmes offers a new way to people who often feel maths is the same old thing again and again.

"The three minute clip sparked off a really animated discussion on their feelings about maths."

Sum Chance

There is a tendency to think that there is no post broadcast use for the motivational series *Sum Chance*, but tutors have found a range of ways to use them. One scheme edited sections to use for scheme publicity. They also used these sequences in tutor training to generate discussion about maths anxiety, how adults use number skills, and how adults learn. Case studies became much more real when people spoke for themselves from a screen rather than being described on a piece of paper. Another tutor used programme 1 to generate a lively discussion that certainly helped the students to clarify how common maths

Figure 1 **Session Plans using A Way With Numbers programme 9 which covers simple bookkeeping and accounts.**

A. FOR TEACHING

Learning outcomes: To enable students to use methods of recording money transactions. (Numberpower: Unit 3, 2; stage 1 and 2; Unit 2:3 Foundation).

Before viewing:
Select relevant clip.
Set aims with group or individual.
Discuss learners' own experiences of recording money.
Cover unfamiliar language.
Set tasks for viewing.
- note how money is recorded.
- note things that are new and useful or that you may need help with.

View and make notes on clip with Carol Vorderman in studio with Steptoe's Accounts (1 minute 40 seconds).

After viewing:
Discuss most useful parts.
Relate to students' own methods.
Rewatch if necessary.

Possible follow up:
Steptoe worksheet. (figure 2).
Practise keeping records of money for some purpose: group tea and coffee money, design own balance sheet for task of returning to work or study (time, cost, positive and negative gains).
Demonstrate competence for Numberpower.

Further Extension work: Use childminder clip, further into the programme, in a similar way to develop more advanced bookkeeping skills.

B. FOR TUTOR TRAINING

Learning outcomes: To be aware of variety of approaches, contexts and resources used in teaching budgetting and recording money. (This could relate to session 5 City and Guilds 9283 Initial certificate and competence B10 D15-17 of City and Guilds 9281 Certificate).

Before viewing:
Select parts to view – Steptoe, studio sequences, brief clip from childminding and bookkeeping films.
Ask group to note all contexts where the ability to use money is needed.
- note all aids used.
- note all methods used, particularly those encouraging active learning (quick methods, estimation, useful tips).

View and make notes.

After viewing:
Discuss and compare findings.
Relate to aims of session and view again to consolidate aspects.

Follow up:
Design a simple worksheet for recording use of money.
Design a lesson plan using video clip to develop students' understanding of recording money.
Design assessments for student accreditation on recording use of money.

Figure 2 Worksheet 1

Steptoe's Accounts

These are some of Steptoe's transactions:

Bought hay	£5.20
Sold carpet to Mr Wilton	£15.65
Paid rent	£23.76
Sold six oak chairs to Chip and Dale Ltd	£71.35
Sold violin to Mr. Menuhin	£25.60
Scrap iron sold to Smelt and Co	£5.94

Put the items into the income or expenses columns

INCOME EXPENSES

Do the Steptoes make a profit?

Find other examples of recording money (Post Office book, bank accounts, tea and coffee accounts)

Design a way of recording money for yourself.

anxiety was, how past learning experiences had formed that feeling, and how it often got in the way of their own learning. She linked this into pages cut out from the 'A Way With Numbers' leaflet on 'memories from school', 'what can you do already?' and 'what do you want to improve'. This was a very effective session for students identifying how they felt, and what they wanted from their learning.

Other Resources

In this article I have looked at at *A Way With Numbers* and *Sum Chance*. With recent changes in the copyright law, the whole range of television programmes can now be recorded and used for educational purposes by educational institutions if they are licensed by the Educational Recording Agency. After checking with your institution, if you are not sure about your right to record contact ERA Ltd., c/o ALCS, 33-34 Alfred Place, London WC1E 7DP. Tel: 071-255 2034.

Other useful resources when considering using television and radio include:

'The Video to Learn' staff development package developed by Sue Bernion et al (ITV and Channel 4 Community Education) is full of ideas on how to use video in your teaching.

The handbook *'Television, Talk and Writing'* by Jane Mace and Jane Lawrence which offers ideas based on students' own experience as television viewers. Available from the National Extension College later this year.

Information about BBC educational broadcasts is published in the termly *'Resources for Learning and Training'* booklet available from Information Service 081-991 8031 (24 hours).

I would like to thank all the tutors and trainers who have shared their ideas about using televison and radio with me. In particular I would like to thank Jenny Walsh (ABEU Liverpool), Jane Turner and Barbara de Lissandri (Waltham Forest Adult Education Service).

If you are using any of the basic skills series and have developed work around them please contact: Pat Hulin, Education Officer, BBC Education, Room 410, Villiers House, Ealing Broadway, London W5 2PA. ■

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USING AUDIO TAPES IN ABE

Nuala Govenden, Open Learning tutor at Killingworth and Burnside Open Learning Centres, North Tyneside, suggests ways of using audio tapes in basic skills work.

Background

I have been concerned for sometime that we use a great many print based resources in basic skills provision, yet students often have difficulties with written texts. Audio tapes are a means of redressing the balance.

The medium of audio tapes is an easy one to work with for both tutor and student. The technology is straightforward and simple and familiar enough to the student not to interfere with the learning process itself.

Generally I find usage falls loosely into three areas: beginner readers, writing, self help.

Reading

Being able to read a book or an article from a magazine can be an enormous confidence booster to a beginner reader. Putting books or articles of reasonable length onto tape and combining them with the printed texts allows students access to interesting, purposeful, and relevant adult reading material. Length is important. Most tutors will not have time to put very long books onto tape. The key word is negotiation between student and tutor. Both must reconcile what is desirable with what is practical. The ALBSU Rock Biographies, for example, have proved very popular with beginner readers interested in music. They can be put onto tape in approximately 10 minutes even allowing for speaking at a slower than usual pace. Students who own tape recorders can borrow the tape and book so that they can choose to listen to their tape at times which match their own learning pace.

Individual control is an important feature of audio tape usage which helps students to learn.

Tutors and students may worry that while repeatedly listening to a tape of a book the student is merely committing the book to memory and not actually reading. I have found the following method effective in showing student they are really reading.

- Student and tutor decide on material to be put on audio tape.
- Tape is made and the student works with the tape and a printed copy of text until she/he feels confident in reading it.
- The tutor then creates a new text using words from the original tape.
- The student is then asked to spend some time reading the new text to her/himself. She/he may wish to retell the story/text in their own words. This can be done onto a tape or directly to the tutor. This will demonstrate that the student understands what she/he is reading.

Writing

Students working to develop their writing skills can be encouraged to make their own audio tape. The first student I had who did this was a plumber. He had recently moved from the practical side of plumbing into the offices of a major plumbing supplier. The student had to take telephone orders from clients all over the country. He wished to practise writing/taking orders and learn to cope with people who were at times brusque, spoke quickly and who made no allowances for his feeling nervous. He also had to learn to spell the names of specific industrial plumbing parts.

Over a period of a week I compiled a tape of simulated orders. We had a copy of the company catalogue and concentrated on the items most often ordered. I varied the tempo and the manner of my voice. Other workers and students in the centre made contributions to the tape. Each order had to be typed up so that the student could quickly check his spellings and work as independently as possible.

He got over his fear of the telephone and, with this issue resolved, the student was able to record his own lists of items and check them in the catalogue. As he took more and more responsibility for what he learned he said he felt more in control at work also.

Many people are nervous of taking messages over the phone, either for colleagues at work or family/friends at home. They need to separate the important information from the irrelevant. Using an audio tape can provide an opportunity to do this. For situations like this, and the previous example, audio tapes do not take long to prepare. The individualised, custom-made tape is most effective and relevant in supporting the learning process.

It is an obvious point but the teaching is heard and not read. The human voice, unlike a written text, can be modulated. Stress and inflection can enhance meaning and clear up verbal ambiguities. Touches of humour can also be used.

Self Help

In this section I have included some uses of audio tapes which do not fall into the two previous categories. In Killingworth Open Learning Centre we have prepared tapes to accompany materials on: how to write a CV, letter writing pack, what's so special about Open Learning, returning to learning, understanding spelling strategies, Wordpower explained.

These audio tapes do not repeat what is on the accompaning text, but form an integral part of the pack. Tapes can be used to introduce or explain a concept. The pause/play facility on the tape recorder allows practical tasks to be carried out. The answers are then spoken later on the tape.

Practical points to remember when making an audio tape.

- Use a room with furniture in as it eliminates echoes.
- Turn the volume control right down and avoid extraneous noise.
- Try not to sound as if you are reading a script.
- Speak as naturally as possible.
- Enlist the help of other people. I have found students who are confident readers will record short texts onto tape. Students who enjoy writing short stories or poetry are quite willing to place some of their work onto tape for beginner readers in the centre.
- If you are preparing a study pack of tape and text try it out on a friend or colleague first. Check for pace, clarity and spoken style.

Conclusion

Using audio tapes in Basic Education in general and Open Learning in particular encourages learner control. They offer the student individual attention and in many cases a personalised lesson. Custom made tapes designed for an individual student can offer protection to the less confident. Students can hear and re-hear the material on tape as often as they require. Audio tapes are most effective when they engage the student in active and independent work. As a resource they are inexpensive and have as many different uses as each centre has students. ■

ADULT LITERACY ON INTERACTIVE COMPACT DISC

Technology plays an increasingly important part in all education, not least basic education. Changes take place at a very fast pace, with new developments almost daily. Simon Rosenberg, a member of the team at Cambridge Training and Development, describes an important step forward in learning resources.

CD Rom

Cambridge Training and Development (CTAD) in association with Next Technology, a Cambridge based computer firm, are developing a Training Agency funded interactive compact disc (CD-ROM XA) to help adults learn to read. The disc, which will run on IBM-compatibles with certain upgrades, combines all the elements of multi-media (photographs, text, sound, computer graphics and motion video) and will contain about 200 hours of learning material.

The technology is enormously flexible. A CD-ROM – *compact disc read only memory* – stores written, audio and visual (computer graphics, photographs and partial screen video) material digitally on disc in the same way audio CDs store music. One CD-ROM disc contains about 600 times more information than a conventional floppy disc. XA – *extended architecture* – is a compression technique that increases the CD-ROM storage space 16 times. Both of these run on IBM PCs. The CD-ROM drive goes in the same position as a floppy drive and the XA card goes in one of the expansion slots.

How does it work?

The combination of sound and vision enables basic readers to use the machine with ease. You start by following a video on the basic functions. Then you hear specific instructions on how to do the activities. All written text you see on screen has been recorded, so that it can always be read out. You make your decisions by clicking your mouse on icons and pictures on the screen.

So what can you do? The storage space of the disc means there is room for a wide range of activities. You can put together a magazine article, learn to read a map, design a cover for a magazine or do some practice on scanning down a list of words for your name, guessing words through cloze procedure or learning the 10 most common words. Assessment comes in two parts. Firstly an assessment of competence linked to the first stage of the Wordpower certificate and then a question and answer self-assesment session to look at confidence and attitudes towards reading, both crucial to the successful development of reading skills. All this is automatically stored on your own floppy discs. So you can come back to your magazine article or be told six weeks after you started that you have improved a great deal at the Wordpower assessment.

The screen above is from an activity where you put together a magazine article. You select which subject, which photo, which headline and finally which sentences you want to use. Once you are satisfied with what you have done you can print it out. There is enough choice to give a feeling of creating something individual.

CTAD and Next Technology have been developing the project for just over a year. The basic approach and the types of activities and assessment were developed with help from students and tutors in ALBSU Open Learning Centres. The sentences used in the magazine articles were collected by asking students in the centres for their opinions on the topics, thereby mirroring the language experience mode. The project is now approaching the field test stage. Any centres interested in piloting the disc should contact CTAD.

Self learning competency

The project has attracted considerable interest because of the approach it uses. Students are not being taught to read on-screen. Instead the technology allows them to listen to the words they can't read so that they can get on with the actual activities on the machine such as editing a magazine or map reading.

When they have finished they take away laser print outs of the texts they have compiled and go off and read these. In doing the activity they will have gone through the tedious process of finding out what all the words say and will have learnt to read *incidentally*.

This is important because the experience of being taught often gets in the way of learning. This is certainly true for adult literacy; it is equally true for other skills which require confidence, and willingness to solve problems yourself. This term has been called *Self-learning competency*. Methods to get people competent in self-learning have somehow to break out of the framework of teaching and being taught, they have to make learning happen without people knowing that it is.

You can't prevent people from realising they are in an open learning centre and sitting at a machine because they want to learn to read. But you can make the experience a creative act, which is powerful enough to help forget why they are there and what they think they are doing. Further, by allowing people to get on with challenging and fascinating tasks, with tangible outcomes of which they can feel proud, they are acquiring self-learning competence as well as learning to read.

For technical details and further information contact: Cambridge Training and Development, 43 Clifton Road, Cambridge CB1 4FB. ■

Information

The Starter Pack

Materials for Tutors in Adult Literacy

This is a 'survival pack' of materials, ideas and approaches for tutors and volunteers who are new to teaching adults or young people with literacy problems. There are suggestions about how to approach teaching in a way which encourages learning as well as practical activities for use with students.

The materials can be used in 1:1 and small group situations, and include a range of suggestions suitable for beginning learners as well as those needing to brush up on their skills for work or study.

Through not specifically designed for use with speakers of other languages, or people with learning difficulties, the materials may be adapted for a variety of learners and the advice on how to create a good learning situation is applicable to most teaching situations.

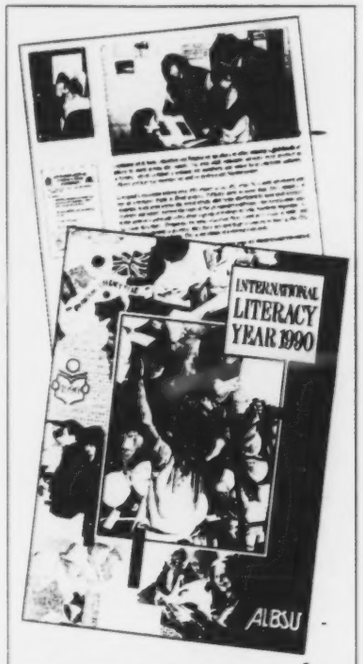
The pack contains nine sections:

- Start Reading
- Start Writing
- Spell Well
- Learning to Learn
- Moving On
- Be a Better Reader
- Write More Write Better
- Talking and Listening
- Resources

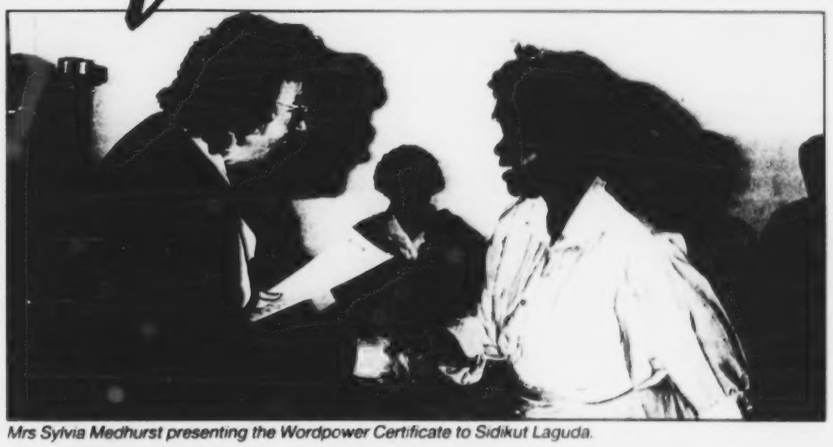
The pack will be of use to:

- basic skills tutors and volunteers in adult and further education, in training programmes and in the voluntary sector
- participants in the City and Guilds (9282) Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills.

Available from ALBSU. Price £5.00. Postage: single copies £2.00; 5 copies £3.40; 10 copies £4.15.



International Literacy Year 1990 provides an overview of the many activities which took place during the Year. From a balloon race and limerick competition in Cornwall, ILY cake and earrings in Mid-Glamorgan, to a collection of students' work from across the world, in Newcastle, the book catches the flavour of the great variety of activities organised to celebrate International Literacy Year. Of course, it cannot claim to be a comprehensive account of all the Year's activities, which would be too numerous to mention. If you would like a copy of this free book please send a stamped (46p) addressed envelope to ALBSU.



Mrs Sylvia Medhurst presenting the Wordpower Certificate to Sidikut Laguda.

On Friday 12th April, 20 happy ex-Workbase students all workers in Adult Homes received their City & Guilds 3793 'Wordpower' Awards at either Foundation or Level One, presented by Mrs Sylvia Medhurst, Assistant Director of Social Services, London Borough of Lambeth. The short reception was attended by students, their managers and training co-ordinators and representatives of other Departments.

Jim Cornelius, Chair of Workbase Management Committee and NUPE Assistant Divisional Officer made a short speech of congratulations as did Alan Wells, Director, ALBSU, who lightened the atmosphere.

Sylvia Medhurst thanked the student group, saying the service delivery and communications within Adult Homes had shown a real improvement as a result of Workbase Training. She added that she was pleased to see women achieving qualifications particularly as they had never previously been given the opportunity. "People are our greatest resource", she said. She thanked tutors and Rose Taw who co-ordinated "Without her we wouldn't be here today". Rose said students had worked hard to complete the work in short courses.

"We didn't expect this, it's great to be appreciated", and "I've never had anything before. I never left school with any bits of paper", were typical comments. Three of the group have since been promoted into social work grades and others 'have plans' which we all hope they will now have increased skills to tackle and realise.

NATECLA Conference and AGM 1991 University College, Swansea, Cymru 5-7 July 1991

'1992, Language and Communities'

- What are the implications for change and development after 1992?
- How will we see the relationship between language and ethnicity?
- How will we define bilingualism?
- What will be the interface between EFL and ESOL?
- How will Section 11 funding fit in with the developments in Europe?
- Who will be able to benefit from free language provision?

Keynote speaker: Tove Skutnab-Kangas on 'The position of Linguistic Minorities in Europe after 1992'.

Venue

University College, Swansea.

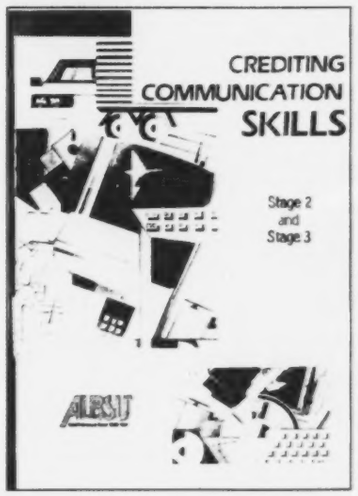
Enquiries:

Bookings: Contact Kathleen Jenkins at the NATECLA National Centre, tel: 021-778 2311, ext. 290.

Workshops: Jane Taylor, 2 St Nicholas Park, Easton, Bristol BS5 0LP, tel: 0272 510350.

All other enquiries to Conference Co-ordinator: Agnes Keane, 78 Station Road, Llanishen, Cardiff CF4 5UT, tel: 0222 757370.

Timothy Eggar, Minister of State for Education and Science, gave the keynote address at an ALBSU conference for TECs held in London on 14 March. Opening the conference he said: "I am personally convinced of the importance of ensuring that everyone is equipped with the basic skills necessary to contribute effectively to society. It is essentially a question of equity. Individuals cannot make use of opportunities open to them, or develop their potential, without these basic skills. It is also a question of economic good sense. We need to strengthen the workforce, and thus strengthen the economy – something from which we all benefit."



Crediting Communication Skills – Stages 2 and 3

This new workpack is the third in a series designed to support the Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative. It provides guidance to tutors and trainers who wish to deliver the higher levels of the City and Guilds Certificate in Communication Skills (3793). It provides example assessment material, in a wide variety of contexts, for each unit and element which appear at Stages 2 and 3. It also suggests ways in which tutors and trainers can develop strategies whereby a range of different communication skills are assessed through a single activity.

This publication will be available from ALBSU at the end of June. Price £12.50 plus postage and packing, £2.45 for a single copy.

Photo Stories

Two new mystery stories, *Something Evil* and *Skeleton in the Cupboard*, are told simply and effectively, and are suitable for adults at beginning levels of reading. Each book is in full colour, with one photograph per page and short accompanying text.

Available from ALBSU. Price: £1.60 each. Postage: 1 copy £0.27; 5 copies £0.71; 10 copies £1.80.

Correction

In Newsletter No. 40 the article 'Corporate Links with the Community' should have stated that the Grand Metropolitan Trust is sponsoring the **Referral Service** for the BBC television programmes *Sum Chance* and *A Way With Numbers*, not the programmes.

SHORT COURSES

Staff at Open Door, Prudhoe, and the Gatehouse, Hexham, have explored ways of offering adults a range of subjects, at different levels, in an open learning setting. Yvonne Clark, Trish Lis and Caroline Warburton describe the 'Short Course' option which has been most successful in attracting new students, and in offering progression.

WHAT IS A SHORT COURSE?

The provision of short-term courses is not unusual in many areas of adult eduction, such as the WEA, but we believe that in ABE centres it is not yet widely accepted as a means of learning. One of the problems of any centre associated with 'adult literacy' is overcoming the stigma often attached to this term. By offering a wide selection of both interest-based and academic courses alongside basic skills provision, students could be coming along to study on any number of levels or topics. This has been a key factor in our smaller, more rural communities in Northumberland.

We define a short course as a course of study, centred on one interest or topic, and lasting approximately 6-12 weekly sessions of one and a half to two hours per session. Groups of up to 10 students attend each course, which is led informally by a tutor with appropriate skills or qualifications.

This differs radically from the more traditional 'open-ended' approach more common to ABE, and offers a more clearly defined timescale for tutor and student alike – a true 'contract to learning'.

WHY OFFER SHORT COURSES?

Short courses are geared to give adults time and space to consider new possibilities in their education, career and personal development. We are firmly committed to running short-term 'taster' courses alongside basic skill, literacy and numeracy work, and longer-term certification courses. With limited hours, it is restrictive to commit staff time to a large number of longer courses with perhaps a narrower access level. Discussions with students and end-of-course evaluations reinforce our findings that:

1. Adults like short-term commitment and a choice of activities, as their introduction to the centre. We are seen as a 'learning centre' where a wide variety of skills can be learned or updated, rather than a 'basic education' centre. Students can try something new with no long-term restrictions.

2. Adults who come along for a more recreational activity (cookery, sewing), may then seek help with English or Maths. In every case so far, students say they would not have felt comfortable coming forward specifically for literacy/numeracy help – this takes courage. We therefore feel our interest-based short courses offer a gentle introduction to the centre.

3. A wider range of subjects can be covered.

4. New students coming specifically for help with English and Maths like the variety of courses on offer simultaneously at the centre: it enables them to blend in and feel less exposed. They can also 'observe at a safe distance'.

5. Short courses can offer a route to Open Learning: this has been spectacularly successful with our word-processing students. We have also been able to attract volunteer tutors as a result of short course provision.

6. Confidence-raising is central to our work, and for the majority of our students, a short course working in a small group, is more effective in developing skills and confidence than longer-term 1:1 work.

7. The schedule re-introduces students to a regular routine of attendance and study, which often continues as independent study once the course ends.

WHO DO THEY ATTRACT?

We have found that interest-based short courses attract *many* new students who would otherwise never have approached us for help. Once familiar with the centre, they often express a need for subsequent 'traditional support.' Many progress to other short or long-term certification courses where further skills and confidence can be developed.

80% of students have been women, including many single parents and women wanting to return to work, who enjoy short courses where they can update or learn skills for the home or workplace. Other students include those considering longer-term education elsewhere, who need support in their initial return to study. We have made special efforts to attract more male students including offering a cookery course, and plans include liaising with our Community Education Department at Prudhoe in order to gain workshop space for woodwork and car-maintenance courses. One problem we face is that **free** short courses, especially in wordprocessing, can attract students who are really better equipped to attend more formal fee-paying courses at established evening class centres. We therefore must prioritise offering places to students to some degree: this takes tact and also good working relationships between centres who can then cross-refer students to more appropriate provision when necessary.

RUNNING A SHORT COURSE – THE STAGES INVOLVED

When planning provision we first looked at our own strengths to see what areas we could effectively cover. An interesting range of skills emerged, from sign language to wordprocessing, women's groups to calligraphy. A colleague was recently quoted in the press as having taken a year to sew an apron, so we look elsewhere for 'like-minded' specialists to offer other practical skills! Specialist speakers are also invited to some sessions where their expertise would enhance the course.

We currently run approximately 13 short courses per term at **Open Door,** and 9 per term at **The Gatehouse.** Since Autumn 1989, approximately 425 students have been actively involved in short courses at **Open Door** and 243 at the **The Gatehouse.** I outline here the stages involved in planning and running just one typical short course, **'Creative Writing.'**

1. Decide on a Topic

Talking to students and tutors identifies

A TYPICAL SHORT COURSE CURRICULUM – CREATIVE WRITING/WRITERS' GROUP

AUDIENCE:	Adults feeling more confident about their writing, but who would still like support with writing skills.
PURPOSE:	To meet needs expressed by students, some already writing at home but needing help or direction. To explore writing for enjoyment; trying expressive writing rather than form-filling, business letters, etc.
SCHEDULE:	Initially six weekly sessions of two hours each. Extended to eight sessions in response to student interest.
DATES:	27th April – 29th June 1990
TIMETABLING:	Running alongside O.L. & 1:1 work; also Women's Group running in adjacent room.
LOCATION:	GATEHOUSE O.L. CENTRE, sharing room with 1:1 & O.L.
FACILITIES:	Comfortable seating area for group discussion; option of tables and chairs for writing if wanted. Flip chart for planning/brainstorming. Coffee/tea, etc.
STAFFING/FUNDING:	Centre tutor working within contracted hours.
COST TO STUDENTS:	Free
GROUP SIZE:	Six enrolled, rising to 11 after word-of-mouth publicity.
PUBLICITY:	Word-of-mouth to existing groups and O.L., as well as via existing students to newcomers. A4 course outline available at centre and posted out A5 coloured handbills available at centre A4 coloured poster displayed at centre A4 termly news-sheet giving brief details of course Included in short Press Release written by centre staff and published in local weekly newspaper.

THE STUDENTS

	CAME FROM?	PROGRESSED TO?
R	Computer beginners course	Writing at home, also computer certificate course
J	Improve your English course	Two pieces of writing published
I	Improve your English course	HEFC English
E	Improve your English course	AEB English certificate course
M	New student	Computer beginners course
V	Improve your English course	AEB English certificate course
E	Improve your English course	AEB English certificate course
R	New student	Planning to do Wordpower S1
S	New Student	Still in contact with centre
JB	O.L. in English	O.L. Maths – possibly Numberpower
D	Improve your English course	AEB English certificate course

In addition, students elected to continue to meet on a regular basis as a self-help group, both in the centre, and also in each other's homes, once the course had ended.

local needs and interests. Will the subject be interest-based or academic? Is the expertise available? Who is the audience? What is the purpose of the course? Does it lead to balanced provision at the centre? (A short course should supplement and enhance existing provision).

Courses we have offered include:

- Beginners/Improvers Wordprocessing
- Improve Your English/Maths
- Letterwriting
- Sign Language
- Tutor Training
- Women's Groups
- Handwriting & Calligraphy
- Reading with your Children
- Office Skills
- Cookery
- Sewing
- Writing Groups
- Photography
- Pottery
- Holiday French

2. Planning Considerations

Duration and timing?

Crucial factors to be thought through include local school/playgroup hours; local holidays or market days; transport difficulties; access for students who work during the day or shift-patterns; availability of premises.

Once the audience/purpose is identified, these details must meet the needs of potential students or the course will fail. (We have learned this to our cost).

Running courses also taught us that a shorter intensive course is more popular and effective as it keeps up interest and motivation to learn. This was confirmed in our women's groups, for example, where the drop-out rate was significantly higher when we offered the course over 8 sessions than over 6, and for tutor training courses which we reduced from 12 sessions to 4.

Location?

Will the course be centre-based? Will the course be work-based? What facilities will be needed?

Size of group?

Often predetermined by equipment or space available, but we find a smaller group of up to 10 students lends a friendly

MAIN TOPIC	FORMAT	PURPOSE	
Introduction and registration. The process of writing.	Recall Discussion/ brainstorming Compare/share examples showing different styles and techniques. Try out writing activities. Reflect on results! Make Plans. *(Tutor only writes in Session 1 as students may feel uncertain at first in a new group. Negotiable!)*	To understand purpose and audience: register and style. To practise the stages of writing, and planning writing.	To support students wh already involved in, or would like to try, writing projects. To offer those students a forum for ideas and a source of constructive criticism.
Autobiographical writing.		To develop skills to evaluate and criticise different styles: To look at effective use of language: To offer practice in creative/expressive writing based on language experience and thus build confidence.	
Descriptive writing.		To develop skills of observation and narrative: To encourage imaginative use of vocabulary. To encourage use of the senses to stimulate ideas.	
Persuasive writing (in response to student interest)		To encourage planning & presenting a balanced viewpoint. To consider emotive language, and to identify bias. To encourage critical reading and evaluation. To identify areas of strong feeling or controversy as a source of writing. To try out role play and stimulate debate.	
Poetry (in response to student interest)		To try out expressive writing where no rules apply! To encourage awareness of sound, rhythm and layout. To encourage critical reading and evaluation.	
Course Evaluation and Plans Planning a Magazine	Recall. Review course and work done. Write evaluations. Discuss plans (group and individual). Nominate editorial board. Schedule, delegate tasks.	To review work done. To assess progress - did we achieve what we set out to do? To discuss and plan group project: Centre Magazine	
Course extended by two sessions in response to student interest.			
Magazine Magazine	Advertise Research Design Compile Collate Produce Distribute Magazine	To develop a wide range of skills learned during the course and try many new ones. To build on enthusiasm and new-found confidence amongst group members. To value work of all levels produced at the centre.	*Developing skills including . . .* • working and planning independently • working as a group • delegating/sharing/giving and taking instructions or advice *Acquiring new skills in . . .* • assessing pieces of writing, developing critical skills • developing a flat plan for layouts • wordprocessing/photocopying/ collating/binding • using photos and graphics: checking for copyrights • type, cut and paste • estimating quantities and demand • working to a schedule • interviewing and note taking

Follow-up to the Short Course

The group produced a centre magazine virtually unaided, and were notable for their enthusiam and teamwork.

The group continues to meet outside the centre to share and discuss writing projects – open learning in action.

Many progressed to other short courses and certification. (see 'The Students')

▼ INVOLVING OTHER CENTRE USERS WITH SKILLS TO SHARE

▼ THE FINAL RESULT — A CENTRE MAGAZINE!

THE CURRICULUM – CREATIVE WRITING SHORT COURSE, SUMMER 1990

Throughout the course, the tutor aimed for a balance of group and individual work. Each session included a recall, a 5-10 minute 'warm-up' activity such as a word game related to the main theme of the session; discussion and sharing/comparing examples of writing; practical writing activities, and an ongoing long-term project – producing a centre magazine. There was also a five minute "rounding off" activity at the end of each session for variety, time permitting.

atmosphere where the whole group can join in discussions.

Effective timetabling – What else is going on?

Students should see a range of activities happening alongside, promoting interest in subjects new to the student.

Effective staffing of the centre?

Who leads the course ... centre staff or outside specialists? (We rely here on students themselves who answer the telephone, help with administration, meet visitors etc.)

Financing the course?

Will staffing be met from within contracted hours? If not, is there scope for virement from other categories within the budget? Where possible courses are free to students, although **Open Door** is piloting 'self-financing' courses where fees are low but adequate to meet staffing costs: to date this works well.

This approach has also worked well where **Open Door** staff have run work-based short course provision, where the option of a charge per student or a flat rate for the course, has been available.

Our budgets for both centres do allow for 'specialist tutor hours' which are allotted to tutors contracted for the duration of that short course only.

What hardware/software/other materials are needed?

Are they easily accessed? Will they need to be researched or made specially? (This can be a time-consuming process often done in the wee small hours at home!)

3. Publicity

This must be geared and located to attract the target audience, and to give accurate details of **where, when, with whom, how much** and **how often,** as well as **who/ where to contact** for more details or to join the course. (We have found it is reassuring for new students if we include our christian names on any advertising so they know who to ask for).

We have developed our own housestyles of advertising which incorporate the centre logos, and are concise and easily recognised. Appropriate graphics and cartoons also help. Advertising options which we have found effective for short courses include:

- Word-of-mouth recommendation to/ via students
- A4 6-monthly booklet with brief details of all provision, delivered to targetted areas and pickup points locally. Usually delivered in late August and early January by staff, student volunteer, and sometimes paperboys will help
- A4 course outlines giving full details of each course offered. Available at centre, and posted to anyone interested
- A4 termly news-sheet with brief update on new courses starting soon, distributed locally and given to all centre-users
- A4 and A3 coloured posters distributed locally
- A5 coloured handbills in same design as posters, available at centre and pickup points locally
- Newspaper coverage: this includes articles, adverts, and press releases which we write and send in (a good way of making sure the wording is accurate)
- Inclusion in other local Community Education brochures, alongside other evening class provision
- local fundraising events where we ensure all the above are available.

Making and siting publicity is a skill learned by trial and error. Local pickup points would include libraries and mobile library vans, community centres, toddler groups, post offices, swimming pools, health centres and places where the target audience are likely to congregate.

THE COURSE ITSELF

What to call it?

This is often undecided until late in the day. The title needs to be clear, easy to remember, and non-patronising, eg: 'Improve Your English/Maths' or 'Introducing Wordprocessing'. More inspired titles have included 'Style on a Shoestring' and 'Healthy, Wealthy and Wise'. It can be difficult to be original about some subjects, such as 'Money Management', and we felt on reflection that 'Creative Writing' had a middle-class overtone so we re-named it 'The Writers' Group'. Christen with care!

If the course is one of a range of levels, make sure it is easy for staff and students to differentiate. We keep to a pattern where possible to indicate if the course is for 'Beginners'; or to 'Improve your....', or 'Moving on with....'

The Curriculum

Questions to ask. . .

- Is the curriculum prescriptive or student-directed?

Is the format to be

- a discussion group?
- a talk or talks by visiting speakers?
- Practical activities?

What are the core elements and how are they to be presented?

Ideally we aim for a happy medium where the curriculum and format are largely planned to encourage progression of skills, but sufficiently flexible to allow for needs expressed during the course to be met.

Record-Keeping

While we do keep records of individual progress and plans for students working 1:1 with tutors, it is impossible within our hours to keep individual records for short course students, beyond those already stored on our centre database for statistical purposes.

Evaluation

Did we/did the course achieve what we set out to do?

Evaluation is ongoing throughout the course and a student's progress is discussed frequently with him/her with a view always to 'What next?' All short courses are evaluated constantly by staff **and** students to assess whether needs are being met, and how short courses might be improved. We often adapt our courses in direct response to the views expressed by students. A written evaluation is also done at the end of each short course and stored at the centres for future reference.

PROBLEMS WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED

We have already mentioned the question of prioritising places for students according to needs. Entitlement is an important consideration: we need to concentrate on offering **progression** to students, rather than just a continuous supply of interesting courses. Some students enjoy what we offer and are reluctant to try anything elsewhere, but this would restrict access to places for new students. This has not yet proved a problem at either centre, and we feel our ongoing contact with students and joint negotiation of plans has helped.

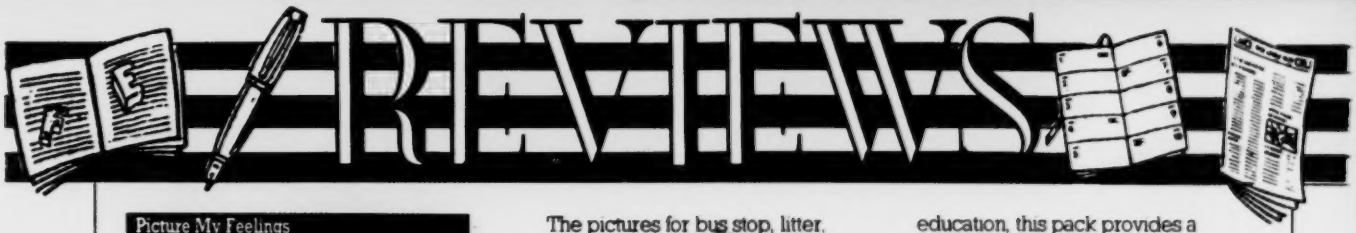
Offering a range of courses, and the preparation and flexibility required of staff, puts considerable demands on already limited hours. We must also be versatile and able to combine running courses alongside 1:1 work, administration, and visitors who may require our undivided attention. Some courses are very popular, especially beginners' wordprocessing, and we must try to keep teaching fresh despite repeating the same basic course each term.

CONCLUSIONS

Short courses are effective because they combine the best features of standard ABE provision, with scope for a wider access level, attracting new faces to our centres and offering variety of levels and skills. They give us new possibilities to explore in teaching, and allow for effective use of manpower where one tutor can cater for a sizeable group and within a stuctured framework.

425 students at **Open Door,** and 243 at **The Gatehouse** confirm our view.

And besides, we **enjoy them!** ■



Picture My Feelings
Words We Need

Edited by Liz O'Boyle and Bryony Jacklin

Picture My Feelings is published by Learning Development Aid, Duke Street, Wisbech, Cambs PE13 2AE.

Words We Need is published by The Consortium, Resources for Learning Difficulties, Jack Tizzard School, Finlay Street, London SW6 6HB

Price: Picture My Feelings £13.50 (+ 10% p&p on orders under £65.00) Picture My Feelings £10.00 plus p&p

No ISBN

Both books are spiral bound consisting of photo-copiable sheets which aim to 'encourage a favourable attitude towards books and reading for students with learning difficulties'.

'Picture My Feelings' covers a range of emotions and feelings, for example, 'I'm worried, I'm happy'. The student completes the phrase by adding their own personal information.

The drawings are big and bold but for my students the facial expressions do not offer clear enough clues to the emotions expressed. Care has been taken to show a whole cross-section of society although doing so has made it difficult for some students to identify with the person in the picture, for others it was not a problem.

Everyone who used the book enjoyed it. For some it has fulfilled the publishers' aims and encouraged a positive attitude toward printed material. For others, the pleasure came in discussing emotions with a group of friends. Through the book we all learnt a lot about each other. We discovered what made us laugh or cry and what made us angry. Some people were hesitant at first to talk about feelings but doing so as a group helped to break down barriers.

'Words We Need' is a set of drawings showing situations where social sight signs occur. The student completes the picture by adding the appropriate sign, e.g. 'Pay Here' in the blank sign above the cash register. This can be hand written or completed by using copies of the signs printed at the back of the book.

My students, young and old, enjoyed using something they could build up into a personal file. Having a file which provided evidence of what the student could do, and succeed at, fulfilled a need.

The pictures for bus stop, litter, ladies and gentlemen need no explanation but others are not so clear. However, this is not necessarily a disadvantage as it stimulates discussion.

Christine Wheatley
Tutor/Organiser
Continuing Learning Centre
Hampshire Education Authority

Counselling in Educational Guidance

by Diane Bailey and others

Published by National Extension College, 18 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 2HN

Price: £45.00

ISBN: 0 860 82885 9

This training pack has been written by a group of people with an established track record in the field of Adult Educational Guidance which is reflected in its practical and user friendly approach.

The pack consists of eight units covering the Explorative, the 'New Understanding' and the Action Planning stages of the guidance process. The Units follow a similar, easy to follow format, combining case study work with experiential learning techniques. The aims and outcomes of each unit are clearly defined within a realistic time scale. The further resources section at the end of each unit provides the key text for further reference.

Particularly recommended is Unit 5 which covers all aspects of the difficult topic of finance.

This pack could be used by the individual but more will be gained from a group situation. It has the flexibility to enable those new to guidance to confront issues as well as providing experienced practitioners with a process to build on existing skills.

One of the weaknesses, despite its title, is the lack of content on basic counselling skills. In fact, to cover this, one has to refer to a separate publication.

The strength of the pack is that one can pick and mix the contents depending upon the students' needs or the aims of the training session. The writer has used this approach in a number of staff development activities.

As guidance is becoming integrated into many aspects of education, this pack provides a necessary and a valuable resource. It will be of great benefit to all those involved in adult education. Overall this pack is attractively presented and well thought out, making it a pleasure to use.

Liz Davies
Adult Educational Guidance Co-ordinator (North)
Hertfordshire Education Authority

Barbed Lines

Edited by Debjani Chatterjee and Rashida Islam

Published by Bengali Women's Support Group & Yorkshire Arts Circus

Available from Yorkshire Arts Circus, School Lane, Glasshoughton, Castleford, West Yorkshire WA0 4QH

Price: £4.99

ISBN 0 947780 46 7

This book contains some excellent pieces of work. There are some very good stories and poems written by ladies and illustrated by well known writers Debjani Chatterjee and Rashida Islam – their work has always been good. This special book is a mixture of stories and poems done by Asian ladies, who are living in this society where racism is still a problem.

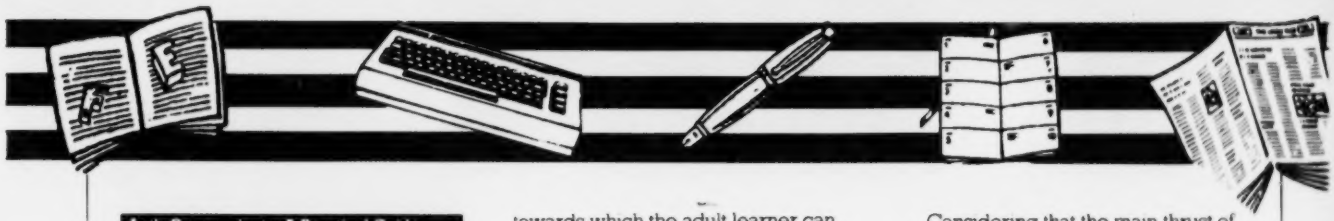
As every individual's stories and poems are different from each other, the taste and sweeetness of language is different from story to story and from poem to poem. But one thing is common among all these writers and that is that they speak in unison.

This book is an attempt to deliver their message to the society in which they are living and to develop the values of freedom in the British Asian culture.

This book would be very useful if it were to be introduced to the libraries, schools, FE colleges, AE Centres and particularly for students from Asian Ethnic minorities doing GCSE English.

I recommend this book to every open minded reader and writer in this society. I think it will also be very helpful for Ethnic Minority women's organisations for them to make this book available for their members. This book is very good for understanding today's British Asian women's culture.

Mohammed Ismail
ALBSU Local Language Support Project Co-ordinator
Rotherham Education Authority



Let's Communicate: A Practical Guide To Adult Basic Education

by Norma Mudd

Published by Hodder and Stoughton (in association with the United Kingdom Reading Association)

Price: £4.95

ISBN 0 340 53877 5

An interesting book which offers extra practical guidance to those involved with helping adults communicate via the basic skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Although it does not offer many innovative ideas, it gathers together the threads of teaching methods, other research and publications, to offer an extremely useful and comprehensive outline to help guide adult tutors, learner tutors or volunteers.

From an overall view of World Literacy, the author discusses different methods of teaching children and adults to read, looks at reading material and makes recommendations to the reader.

Interesting comments on writing, with some stimulating ideas for helping adults produce some writing of value and helping tutors value pieces which are provided are the topics in the chapter devoted to the art of writing. Also included are letters and verses written by adults who have been illiterate.

The chapter on Listening and Speaking attempts to link the child's aural and oral development to that of the adults with emphasis on the recommendations of the Bullock report of 1975. The National Curriculum is touched on with its implications for education in general.

A comprehensive chapter on reading offers great detail on teaching methods – for example, paired reading, phonetics and word building – and puts the emphasis on the importance of the comprehension of the text and ideas for reading to students, and reading materials available.

Each chapter is summarised, which aids the reader's comprehension of the important concepts of the subject. Also included are previewing techniques which can be of interest to those not familiar with this practice. Ideas are offered for use of tape recorders and information is given on formal qualifications and examinations towards which the adult learner can work. Tutors are given help on time management of classes, reasons why adults are learning for the second time and tried and tested practical ideas and tips from other tutors.

This book would be an invaluable guide to the learner tutor, volunteer or indeed anyone involved with helping the adult learner – including those who have been working with adults for some time – as it shows some of the traps which even experienced tutors fall into. It highlights bad teaching methods and helps to reinforce purposeful, positive teaching with additional information on the background to the theories behind practical tasks.

Jackie Hurley (tutor) and Sarah Fallon (Project Officer)
Barry Open Learning Centre
South Glamorgan Education Authority

CVs With Impact

by Stan Crabtree

Published by Quiltech, 26 Woodside Road, Kingston-Upon-Thames, Surrey KT2 5AT

Price: £5.00 inc. p&p

No ISBN

It is refreshing to read a book on CV's which offers alternatives to the traditional chronological format we are used to. This book encourages the reader to use his/her CV as a sales tool making the most of strengths, using both language and format.

It suggests that a chronological format may work for someone with an impressive education and employment background but for those with few qualifications, long breaks in employment or a conspicuously varied work history for instance, a 'functional' format may be more appropriate. The first page of this format consists of five or six paragraph headings for the candidate to detail their most important qualities under, without the constraints of dates, sequence or continuity.

A third format, called 'One Page' is put forward as a useful tool for those who have just left school or college.

The book gives handy hints on what to write in each of the given sections of a CV and how to write it, and has, in the appendices, examples of each format, covering letters and five pages of useful phrases.

Considering that the main thrust of the book is that CV's should have 'impact', the presentation of the book itself is disappointing. The language used does not recommend it as an ABE resource but it might be a useful reference book for tutors.

Pat Stafford
Co-ordinator, 'Linking Into Training'
Cornwall Education Authority

Rainers Handbook for Young Mothers

by Dr Frances Peck

Published by The Rainer Foundation, 89 Blackheath Road, London SE10 8TJ.

Price: £4.95

ISBN 0 9516498 0 9

I am happy to recommend this book to all ABE tutors working with young women. Tutors will find it a valuable resource in that it presents the opportunity for young people to ask questions on personal topics that are often difficult to broach, providing positive answers and a chance to consider options available for decision making.

The Handbook has been produced by the Rainer Foundation as a source of essential information and advice for the young mother. In 1988 nearly 60,000 babies were born to young women under the age of 20 in England and Wales.

'Because you're young, you don't feel confident enough to ask about things'.

Bringing up a child is very hard work for all women. But when you're young it's even harder, especially if you're single and have to manage alone.

This is not just another pregnancy book, although it gives information about pregnancy and the choices open to young women regarding help with keeping the baby herself, abortion and adoption or fostering. The handbook discusses care of the young mother and her baby, healthy eating, exercise and helpful advice on quitting smoking, alcohol and drugs.

Young women will appreciate the chapters on housing, continuing education, job hunting and the various agencies offering child care. I felt the hints on managing on a low budget, debt management and money saving tips offer guidance and valuable suggestions for the single parent.

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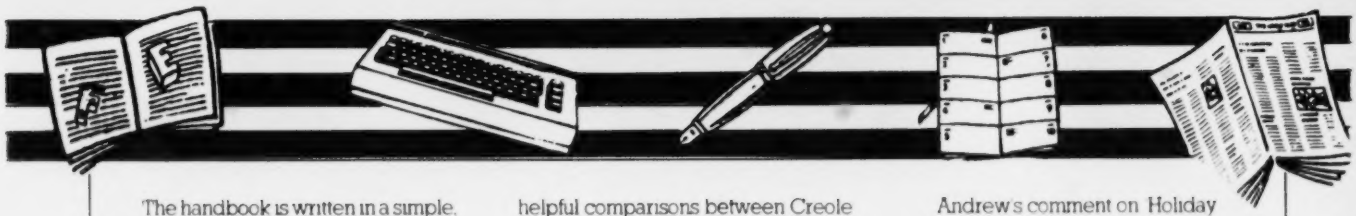

The handbook is written in a simple, direct style for the modern mother coping in today's society. It is well illustrated with cartoons, diagrams and photographs and the chapters are short, clear and well defined.

This book is a must for anyone working with young women whether in discussion groups, Family Centres or on a 1:1 basis.

Irene Roberts
ALBSU Development Project
Warrington Family Centres
Cheshire Education Authority

Makin' de rounds – Caribbean Food

by Various Authors

Published by the Language and Literacy Unit, Southwark College, Asylum Road, London SE15 2RJ.

Price: £3.00

ISBN 1 872972 01 2

It is a real pleasure to find a book that is both interesting in content and practical for tutor purposes. 'Makin de rounds' is a book about Caribbean food that can be used in a variety of ways and its clear structure allows the tutor to confine work to one section or use as a complete resource.

Each section has clear notes for tutors and the individual texts have suggestions for use. The exercises vary from specific matching, cloze and grammar exercises to letter writing, oral work and stimuli for further activities. There is also a novel use of maps and many of the activities could easily be adapted for Wordpower at all different levels.

The authors have been very imaginative in their use of context, including social and historical issues, while still maintaining the connection with Caribbean food. Student writing has been very effectively used in an informative way and as a springboard to further work. There are also very helpful comparisons between Creole and Standard English. The Caribbean card game in the final section manages to bring together much of the previous information and is clearly sign-posted to accommodate all levels of students.

I found this book fascinating and would recommend it to hard pressed tutors for the range it covers as well as for its content value. I feel the cover and title misrepresents the Pandora's Box inside – the book is not for a limited audience but a resource that has valuable use for students of every cultural background and skills level.

Lorraine Collins
Co-ordinator
Pinkwell Open Learning Centre
Hillingdon Education Authority

Keeping In Touch

by Various Students

Published by Cumbria Adult Education Service, 5 Portland Square, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1PU.

Price: £1.00 + 30p p&p

No ISBN

'Keeping In Touch' is a collection of writings compiled by students and tutors from Cumbria Adult Education Service as their contribution to ILY 1990.

There are 57 articles in the book ranging over a fairly predictable medley of topics – work, holidays, hobbies, local interest, jokes, specific incidents and childhood memories. The type face is standard throughout but black and white illustrations and photos break up the text.

I cannot say that the collection offers anything startlingly new in content or presentation. Most ABE schemes could probably draw together a very similar booklet of their own. Nevertheless, the students here who selected articles to look at enjoyed the read.

Andrew's comment on 'Holiday Romance' was 'the storyline isn't my cup of tea but the tale itself is well told'. Pam, a dog-lover, enjoyed reading several articles about pets and Brenda was impressed with the article, 'The Keswick to Barrow Charity Walk' as she had taken part in a charity walk herself and could feel for the walkers. This sums up the book's ability to appeal to others because of its emphasis on familiar situations and themes.

I think a brief introduction by the writers to their work might have helped to differentiate these articles and given them a greater sense of uniqueness to the non-local reader. My own attention was drawn to 'A Visit to Millwood Old People's Home' because this was presented in an interview format which made a welcome change of style from straightforward prose.

Eminently readable but not exciting.

Kay Rhodes
ABE Co-ordinator
Stroud College of Further Education
Gloucestershire Education Authority

Short Notices

The Place of the Lotus

by Jane Spiro

Published by Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd

Price: £1.45

ISBN: 0 340 526394

The Place of the Lotus is just one book in a new collection published by Edward Arnold in their 'Readers Library' Series. The Readers Library is a series of books aimed at second language students. The range covers fiction, biography, true-life mystery, myth and current affairs.

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in November, February, May and July. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor, at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic education.

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA. Tel: 071-405 4017.

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NEWSLETTER

ALBSU

The Basic Skills Unit

Photo: Tony Olsen

Sue Slipman, Director of the National Council for One Parent Families, speaking at ALBSU's Annual conference (see page 2)

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DEVELOPING A 'KITE MARK' FOR BASIC EDUCATION AND ESOL

The proposals in the White Paper, 'Education and Training for the 21st Century', are likely to have a profound effect on Basic Skills and ESOL provision in the next few years. Some of the proposed changes may lead to a stronger, better funded service whilst others may make it even more difficult to get high quality opportunities to improve literacy, numeracy and language skills. Whatever the outcome, we need to be clear about what is worth defending and what needs changing if we are to influence the future.

Perhaps one of the major changes in the last few years has been greater recognition that extreme variations in approach to basic skills and ESOL, under the guise of local variation to meet local need are indefensible. When adult literacy provision began to be made on a significant scale in the mid-1970s, there was little experience or history on which to base provision.

What had existed before 1975 had been small scale and was often based on small voluntary organisations offering individual tuition using volunteers in students' homes, or not very exciting classes, often based on the experience of a school remedial department. Much of this looked either like social work or resembled an extension of school and it's not surprising that few people were attracted to learn and that those who were often stayed for a very short time. Specific training was often non-existent, material was embarrassingly child-like, monitoring was usually absent and the whole atmosphere was of hidden shame.

We have come a long way since then. Although there are still places where basic education and ESOL appear to be little more than a 'cottage industry' and where the need to satisfy the desire of volunteers to occupy their free time is sometimes rather greater than the wish to meet students' needs, it is a fading image. The service has become more professional in the best sense and has developed more effective aims and objectives.

Embarrassment has given way to entitlement, individual has been replaced by flexible and sometimes aimless teaching sessions are being replaced by 'learning plans'. All of this development has not been without its problems, however. Open Learning Centres have sometimes been seen more as a threat to established provision, rather than as a widening of choice and new initiatives, such as the introduction of accreditation, have sometimes been seen as a return to the old 'teach and test' approach to basic education, rather than as an attempt to allow students to obtain recognised credit for their learning.

Sometimes good curriculum ideas have been abused in the process of learning. Sue Slipman, the Director of the National Council for One Parent Families, suggested at ALBSU's Annual Conference last month that student writing had sometimes been used as a way of confining students to an educational ghetto. Certainly it has sometimes appeared to be the 'Valium' of basic education – an excuse for lack of planning and rigour and a poverty of expectation. That's not to say that student writing and publishing have not been important developments in the last decade and more; it's all a question of balance and choice.

SHARING EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE

There's also been a welcome acknowledgement that other people can provide basic skills tuition to meet the needs of particular individuals or groups and that all of the wisdom does not rest in one sector which has 'been doing it for a long time'. It's sad that this generosity and breadth of vision is not shared everywhere and it is still all too easy to get involved in arguments based on the need to protect certain institutions and staff rather than about high quality provision for students and potential students. This is particularly frustrating when so few people can get any basic skills help and when we need the involvement of as many agencies and organisations as possible in order to expand the opportunities available and make sure that the scale of provision more adequately reflects the urgency of the need.

ALBSU welcomes the involvement in

'The Funding Councils will be charged with looking after basic skills provision . . . and, therefore, they will be under a statutory duty to do so'.

The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, Secretary of State for Education and Science, speaking at ALBSU's Annual Conference

basic skills and ESOL of a variety of organisations including adult education centres, colleges of further education, TECs, training managers and the voluntary sector and we are committed to trying to help all of these diverse organisations to establish high quality provision. Different organisations have different skills and expertise and basic skills and ESOL provision does not have to be an unseemly and ineffective competition for students. Rather, different providers can make different types of provision and through co-operation rather than competition can ensure that progression routes exist between different kinds of opportunity.

CO-OPERATION AND COMPETITION

This co-operative approach needs planning and co-ordination, however, if misinformation and suspicion is to be avoided. In the very best LEAs, usually due to the commitment of practitioners, college management and TEC staff co-operative approaches have been developed and provision seems to have a logic which most new students can understand. This is not always the case, however, and still in all too many LEAs coherence is noticeably absent and potential students are bemused and confused by what appears to be the same service offered by different organisations the staff of which appear to rarely talk to each other. In other places, one sector is so keen to dominate that provision is restrictive and alternative opportunites rarely exist. With all of the recent talk of change it is important to remember that the current system has some inherent weaknesses which are not worth defending.

Where diversity has worked has been in those places where experienced practitioners have not felt precious about their work and have been willing to share experience and expertise with those more recently involved. Where it has been more difficult is where a 'stand-off' has developed and where inexperienced, poorly supported new providers have had to learn by themselves, often in the teeth of local opposition. Opposing the involvement of colleges or TECs is short-sighted and hurts students rather than the institution and we are against this approach.

ALBSU tries to develop and support good provision rather than be the advocate of particular institutions or agencies and it is no part of our job to defend restrictive practices or monopolies. We will offer encouragement and support to enable committed organisations and practitioners to improve their provision and strengthen their practice, so that the learning opportunities provided are of the highest quality.

ENSURING QUALITY

It is easy of course of talk about high quality and never define what is meant. ALBSU has undertaken a considerable amount of work to define good practice in adult literacy and basic skills and the documents we have published have been widely adopted. This has led, with the support of local practitioners, to less variability and greater acceptance of minimum standards in staffing, staff training, the availability of learning material, choice in learning style, curriculum planning, assessment and progression. We have tried, in determining what the minimum standards should be, to look at it from the point of view of the potential student; what should they be entitled to as a minimum and what redress should they have if they do not receive a specified level of service and support.

Of course, times change, experience is gained and nothing should be 'set in stone' for all time. Some local variation is desirable and usually it is a genuine variation to meet local differences rather than a diminution of the quality standards agreed to be the right of all potential students.

The changes proposed in the recent government White Paper, 'Education and Training for the 21st Century', make it even more important that quality standards are set and adhered to. One of the positive effects of identifying basic skills and ESOL as priorities for funding through the new Further Education Funding Councils (one in England and one in Wales) is that, for the first time, there will be a statutory obligation to provide. Speaking at ALBSU's Annual Conference, Kenneth Clarke said: *'The Funding Councils will be charged with looking after basic skills provision . . . and, therefore, they will be under a statutory duty to do so.* We have long believed that this will lead to an expansion of basic skills and ESOL provision and an improvement in quality.

The proposals in the White Paper also mean that in some areas the responsibility for basic skills and ESOL provision will shift to colleges. Frankly in some instances this will shift provision from the experienced to the almost entirely inexperienced and a great deal of work will be needed to ensure that the experience is transferred with responsibility. In other areas, provision is likely to improve under the stewardship of the colleges, particularly where the LEA has shown little commitment or interest over a long period and, where despite all of the work of local practitioners and ALBSU, little has changed. Two hours a week (or sometimes one and a half) for little more than half of the year, the opportunity to be taught by untrained, unsupported staff in poor accommodation and with old, out-dated learning material is not much of an entitlement in the 1990s. If the White paper's proposals get rid of that type of basic skills and ESOL provision, we will all be more than grateful.

DEVELOPING A 'KITE-MARK'

Whatever the outcome of change (and a lot can happen between now and April 1993), we need to establish more extensive and better quality provision for every student, wherever they live. Diversity and choice will need to be increased, staff training will need to be seen as a requirement, rigour will have to be seen in learning plans, assessment and monitoring and minimum standards will have to be adhered to. We make no bones about our attitude. ALBSU will recommend that the Further Education Funding Councils only fund organisations where quality standards can be assured and only 'kite-mark' provision where these standards are accepted and reflected in practice. If organisations providing basic skills and ESOL are unable or unwilling to accept these minimum standards they shouldn't be recognised or funded, in just the same way as a hospital or university would not be recognised or funded.

Opportunities exist to improve standards and expand provision. The recent announcement that an additional £34 million will be made available to TECs for special training needs, particularly literacy and numeracy, will place basic skills training high on the agenda and it is encouraging that over 80% of TECs and LEAs are already involved in the new 'Basic Skills at Work' programme. TECs need to be encouraged to adopt a similar 'kite marking' approach for the basic skills training they fund. The willingness to share experience and expertise and develop effective partnerships will be crucial in ensuring that, whoever is the provider, the student or trainee anywhere in England and Wales will get a quality service. ■

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SUCCESS –

A Partnership in Action

Libraries and basic education have had a long, productive association. Anne Wales, Project Co-ordinator, Study Base, Wrexham Library, and Alan Watkin, Deputy County Librarian with Clwyd Library & Information Services describe successful joint initiatives in Clwyd.

Study Base Wrexham Library

Introduction

Over the past two to three years, adult basic education provision in Clwyd has been significantly enhanced through the joint provision of services by the Library and Information Service and the Adult Basic Education Service. This highly successful partnership has led to an increase in provision, an improved range of study and teaching resources, easier and more identifiable access for clients and a higher profile for adult basic education work.

Background

In Clwyd, there was a well established pattern of co-operation between the Library and Information Service and the Adult Education Service, involving a wide span of activities ranging from joint planning and monitoring of continuing education provision to joint training and provision. Major elements in this partnership included:

(a) the Joint Adult Continuing Education Committee – a forum for information exchange, planning and monitoring encompassing the vast majority of information, advice and guidance organisations and education providers in County.

(b) the Adult Education Pack – a locally produced information resource, linked to computerised databases such as TAP, ECCTIS etc., providing a starting point for handling adult education information needs.

(c) Adult Education Fortnight – a joint annual promotional event supported by other agencies featuring special displays, staged exhibitions, guidance sessions, etc.

(d) Joint Research Projects – for instance into the needs of local independent learners.

(e) Open and Distance Learning.

In the context of Adult Basic Education, the Education Department itself has an obvious and central role to play as a major provider and co-ordinating organisation in Clwyd; whilst the Library and Information Service, has, we would suggest, an equally important role to play, in that since their inception in the mid-nineteenth century, public libraries have had a major educational responsibility to foster and develop literacy skills in the community. Indeed public libraries were one of the agencies at the forefront of the major national literacy and numeracy campaigns of the 1970s. This responsibility is readily acknowledged by Clwyd's Library and Information Service and is reinforced by the level of demand and need which is evident in libraries throughout the county. Libraries have for many years acted as contact points for potential students, hosted individual tuition and group sessions and provided, albeit at a rudimentary level, support materials.

In view of the established pattern of close co-operation between the Library and Information Service and the Education

Department in the field of adult and continuing education it was considered that a joint approach was a logical, innovative and potentially the most effective response to further meet the needs for basic education in Clwyd. On the basis of this close and established working relationship a funding application for a local project was submitted to ALBSU to create a permanent proactive facility – Study Base – in Wrexham Library.

Starting Out

Study Base began with the aims of increasing and varying the style of provision of Adult Basic Education in the County by the establishment of additional classes and of exploring ways of enabling tutors and students to evaluate and exploit a wide range of resources.

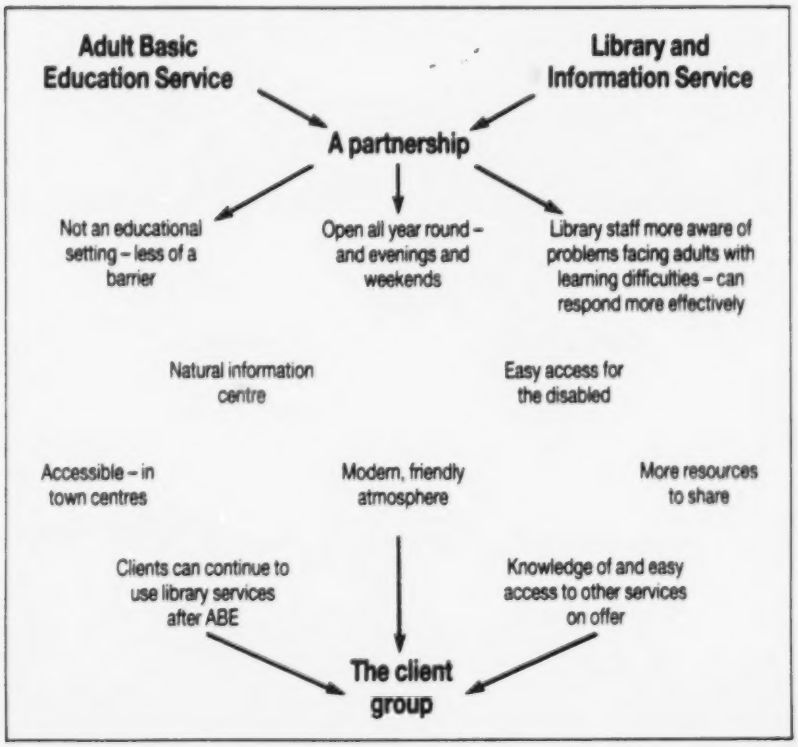
The specific objectives reflected to a large extent the interests of the two services involved. Briefly these were:

- to establish two additional group-based daytime classes each week and a drop-in centre available at specified times, offering advice and additional support for individual students
- to provide facilities for the evaluation of learning materials by tutors and students
- to establish and maintain a collection of relevant materials in a variety of media
- to develop a library user education programme for ABE tutors and students
- to establish outreach facilities in order to make materials from the resources centre available to tutors and students on a county-wide basis.

Today's modern libraries are much removed from those of yester-year. Our library is a modern, open building with a warm welcoming atmosphere, set in a complex with an Arts Centre, meeting rooms and a busy cafe. A wide range of other facilities and resources are available – for example there are information displays in the foyer, an Adult Education Advice and Guidance Counselling service, a Welfare Rights Help Desk, a TAP (Training Access Point) terminal and an Open Learning collection available for loan. Study Base works in an area of the main library (see picture) and also in an adjacent room set aside for teaching and learning.

Advantages of working in a situation like this were obvious from the start but we could also foresee some possible disadvantages from the points of view of our potential clients, the ABE and the Library services:

- A library is not the most natural place to attract someone with reading difficulties.
- Traditionally libraries have a "middle-class" image and our clients often do not fit into this category.
- It is a very public place; students will be seen accessing our service.
- We would be taking up yet more space in an already crowded building.
- Busy library staff would have yet another service to contend with.


Adult Basic Education Service
Library and Information Service
A partnership
Not an educational setting – less of a barrier
Open all year round – and evenings and weekends
Library staff more aware of problems facing adults with learning difficulties – can respond more effectively
Natural information centre
Easy access for the disabled
Accessible – in town centres
Modern, friendly atmosphere
More resources to share
Clients can continue to use library services after ABE
Knowledge of and easy access to other services on offer
The client group

Looking back

Working together

The two years of the original project have now finished and we are in a position to look back and assess our doubts and expectations and that assessment has proved very positive.

As the partnership was proving so successful with Study Base, the Library Service had no hesitation in offering to house the Second Chance Open Learning Centre in its Rhyl Library and the ABE service was more than happy to accept. This is one of the ESG funded centres which extensively utilise information technology for Adult Basic Education. It was the first in Wales to be up-and-running and has attracted much interest nationally for good practice. It has also reinforced the successful experience of Study Base in working in partnership with the Library Service.

Another major outcome has been the investing of funds in ABE books by the Library Stock Resource team. This was very much a joint effort with the team and ABE staff jointly assessing which materials to order, using the resource materials in Study Base as an approval collection, supported by the practical experience of tutors and students. These books are distributed in libraries throughout the county and are available for loan as normal library items.

The production of the library user programme has been an excellent example of how the joint partnership works. The team involved included two ABE tutors and three library staff. We learnt from each other, and the pack, which is near completion, reflects the expertise from both services.

Distributing resources from a centre can be problematical. We have two sets of books, one for display only which is also used by students and tutors "in situ" and the other for loan. ABE groups round the county can send in their requests via the normal library loan system, by calling in or telephoning direct to Study Base or through a visiting ABE Organiser. These orders are then sent out on the library vans if appropriate. To return books, all the tutor or student has to do is drop them in at their local library.

Ease of access for students

Access, in its broadest sense, is made easier for our students.

The number of students making use of Study Base and the Second Chance Centre suggests that libraries are not daunting places. It is significant that these are not

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people who would normally use a library as they are not members – they often ask to join so that they can take books home.

The long opening hours of the library enable our resources to be easily accessed by the public and if the ABE tutor is not immediately available the library staff are more than willing to answer queries or help with problems. After library closing hours it is still possible to use one of the library's community rooms as a teaching/study area.

Many people automatically go to the library for information. Someone instantly on hand to give advice cuts out a step in what can be a painful process for a prospective student. The posters in the library have attracted a lot of referrals – it is not necessarily the students that have seen them but friends or relatives.

In common with other public buildings the library must be accessible to the handicapped. This means that we have no difficulty accommodating students or tutors who use wheelchairs, something not always true of other places that ABE has to use.

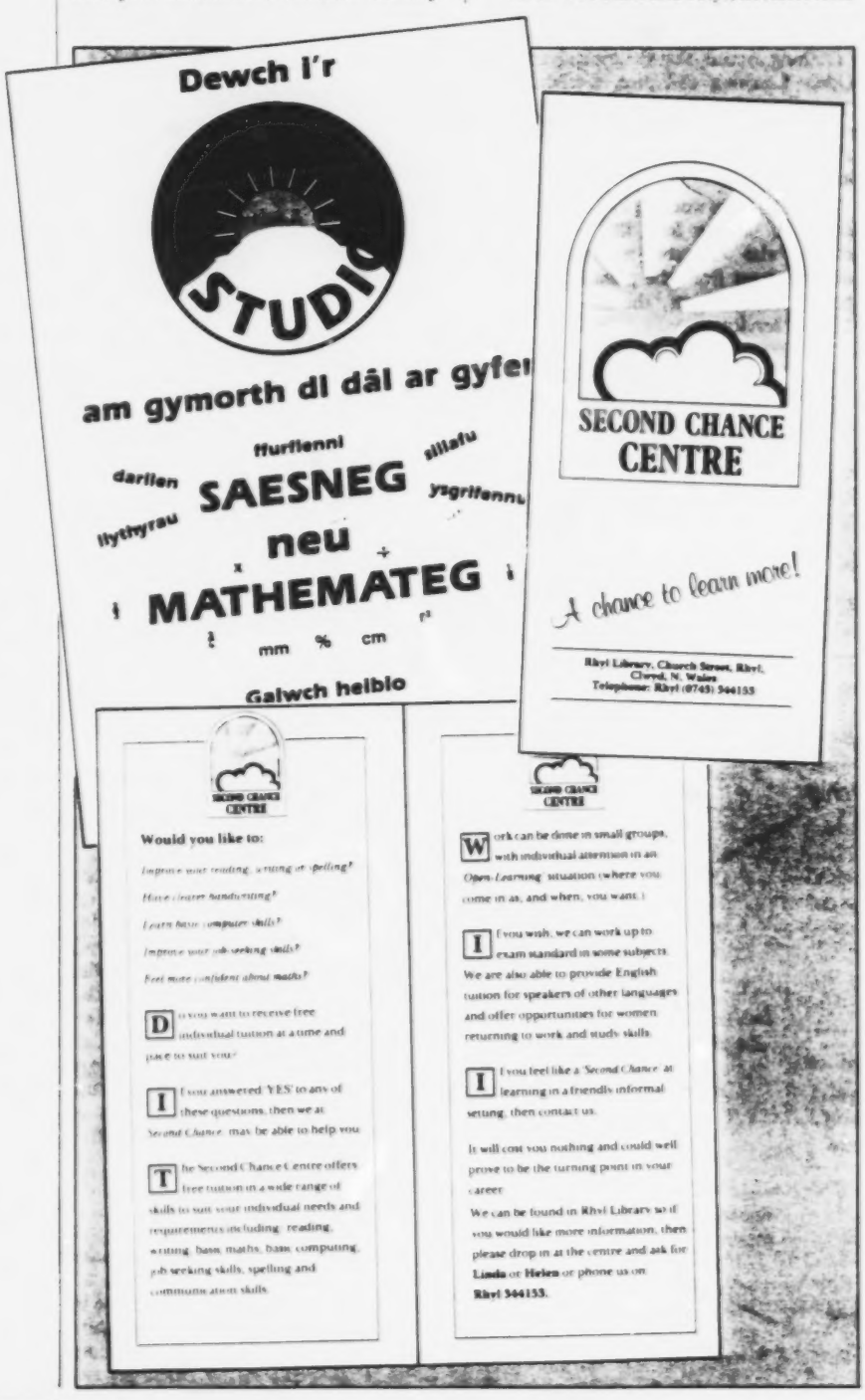
As in Wrexham and Rhyl, libraries tend to be in good central locations, near public transport. It also means that they are near other services such a Jobcentre, Job Clubs, DSS, Army Careers so that as soon as a client is identified by these agencies we can arrange to see them – usually within ten minutes.

Sharing resources

Both the Library and ABE Services have benefited from sharing resources, some examples of which have already been mentioned.

In Clwyd, as in many other authorities, ABE has always used the resources offered by the local library. However, being based in a library means instant access to all sorts of resources – old newspaper cuttings for local history, maps, magazines, daily papers, videos – to name but a few. For 'Wordpower' the setting is ideal, from easy access to reference systems to finding high interest reading materials to giving conducted tours for the oral units.

The resources offered by the library are not always in the form of materials. Many other appropriate services are also at hand and of great use to our students. For example, having the Adult Education Advice and Guidance Counseller based in the library has been very beneficial. She has been able to refer clients needing our help immediately to Study Base and when students are ready to move on her services are there to facilitate this process.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MATHEMATEG
Galwch heibio
SECOND CHANCE CENTRE
A chance to learn more!
Rhyl Library, Church Street, Rhyl, Clwyd, N. Wales
Telephone: Rhyl (0745) 344153
Would you like to:
Improve your reading, writing or spelling?
Have better handwriting?
Learn basic computer skills?
Improve your job seeking skills?
Feel more confident about maths?
Do you want to receive free individual tuition at a time and pace to suit you?
If you answered 'YES' to any of these questions, then we at Second Chance may be able to help you.
The Second Chance Centre offers free tuition in a wide range of skills to suit your individual needs and requirements including reading, writing, basic maths, basic computing, job seeking skills, spelling and communication skills.
Work can be done in small groups, with individual attention in an Open Learning situation (where you come in as, and when, you want.)
If you wish, we can work up to exam standard in some subjects. We are also able to provide English tuition for speakers of other languages and offer opportunities for women returning to work and study skills.
If you feel like a 'Second Chance' at learning in a friendly informal setting, then contact us.
It will cost you nothing and could well prove to be the turning point in your career.
We can be found in Rhyl Library so if you would like more information, then please drop in at the centre and ask for Linda or Helen or phone us on Rhyl 344153.

Looking Forward

The success of the partnership is evident in that new avenues are continually being explored. Currently under scrutiny is how the mobile library service can be utilised to reach the people in need of ABE help in rural areas, and whether we can offer help to the clients of the library service to the housebound. We are also exploring ways to make the library ABE stock more easily accessible – we do not want to end up with them permanently on shelves and not used, as has happened in other authorities. Library staff are also making use of our facilities – maybe it's brushing up maths to take that GCSE we always meant to, or else to get to grips with new technology in a relaxed atmophere.

We must remember that both services and our respective client groups benefit from this partnership – that it is not all one-way. As with all partnerships there are times when things do not run smoothly, when we may wish we had more space or wonder if the grass is greener . . . But the sign of a good partnership is that we can discuss those things knowing that we will eventually come to a solution, each benefiting from the experience and expertise of the other.

The final comment that we would like to make is that our partnership has been and will continue to be successful – that is successful in meeting the needs of our clients. ■

NEW INITIATIVES FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

WITH LITERACY AND NUMERACY NEEDS

Aware that simply referring unemployed adults to literacy classes often led nowhere, the Employment Services in South East Wales, together with Mid-Glamorgan Community Education Services, decided to create specialist provision. Chris Berry, Assistant County Community Education Officer for Mid-Glamorgan, describes the measures taken so far.

South East Wales Employment Service in collaboration with Mid-Glamorgan Community Education Service have established an exciting new initiative to provide unemployed people with an opportunity to brush up on their basic skills.

Phil Linton, Adult Literacy Claimants Adviser, has worked closely with Adult Basic Education Co-ordinators within Mid-Glamorgan. He and Brian Breese, Programme Manager, identified that the job club clients needed to brush up their basic skills if they were to improve their chances of gaining employment. Some of the difficulties encountered in the past were that the Job Clubs referred clients to ABE classes, but in many instances this proved unsatisfactory. Despite re-assurance, clients felt that they were obliged to attend: once they fully realised it was voluntary, they dropped out.

It was then decided that provision for ABE needed to be taken to the Job Clubs. Mid-Glamorgan Community Education Service were unable to make this provision within their current funding. However, by working in partnership, with South East Wales Employment Services providing the funding and Mid-Glamorgan Community Education Service providing expertise and professional back up it was possible to establish a successful relationship.

Discussions were held and agreement was given by Mr Robert Cornwall, Area Manager for South East Wales Employment Services, who had the foresight to recognise a need for this important development. Jennifer Connelly, a full time Second Chance Co-ordinator, took up post on 1st June, 1991. Jennifer is employed by Mid-Glamorgan Community Education Service and seconded to work with South East Wales Employment Services. She is an experienced Adult Basic Education Tutor and worked previously as part-time tutor in Merthyr Tydfil District.

The scope of the post will include:

- identifying and addressing basic skills needs of clients in Job Clubs
- specialist provision for people who are unemployed
- specific basic skills courses to meet local employers' recruitment drives.

The geographical area covered by the post includes Aberdare, Abercynon, Rhymney Valley, Merthyr and Blaenau, Gwent.

Through the Community Education Service, working closely with the Employment Services, Jennifer will receive considerable back up and support. She has a nominated support worker, Margaret Fish, who is an experienced Adult Basic Education Co-ordinator. Jennifer is a member of the County Adult Basic Education Group, which meets regularly, and will receive all the normal benefits of the County Staff Development Policy.

Employment Services initiatives

This project is just one of a number of new initiatives that have been established in recent times by the South East Wales Employment Services. They have provided funding for registered unemployed people to claim:

- fares to classes
- payment for Wordpower and Numberpower accreditation.

These initiatives are obviously designed to make access to learning opportunities as easy as possible.

Evaluation

If the project is successful then an application will be made for funding to continue it. How will we know if it's successful? . . . Indicators will include:

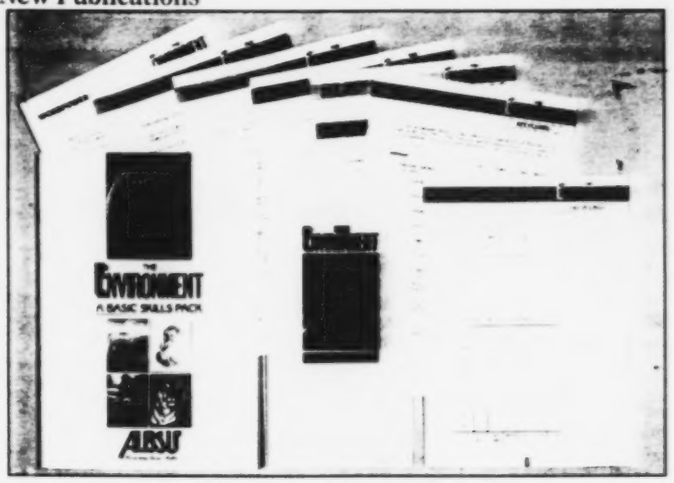
- numbers of clients contacted
- numbers of clients achieving interviews for jobs
- numbers of wordpower/number-power accreditations
- progression of clients on to further learning opportunities.

If you would like further details then contact:

Chris Berry, Assistant County Community Education Officer, Mid-Glamorgan Community Education, Tel: 0443 486260.

Information

New Publications



The Environment Pack

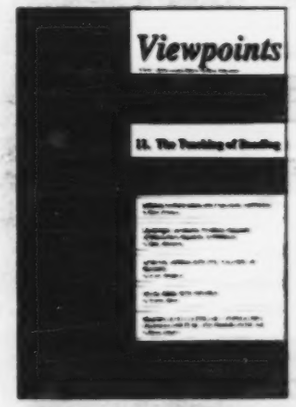
A pack of materials on the environment, for use with groups and individual students, has just been published by ALBSU. The pack contains material at various levels, together with ideas for work that may be developed locally. Sections cover Energy, Recycling, Pollution, Use of Land and Sea and Global Issues. The pack includes a description of competences linked to BSAI, that can be developed by working through each section.

Price: £7.50
Postage: 1 copy 79p; 5 copies £4.10; 10 copies £4.65

by Liz Voss

This tutor manual has been developed by staff at the English Learning Centre at Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology. It describes the use of open learning methods for the learning of English for Speakers of Other Languages, catering for a wide range of language and study skills. The book outlines ways of developing individual programmes of work for students with different learning needs.

Price: £2.50
Postage: 1 copy 38p; 5 copies £2.00; 10 copies £2.52



The latest issue of Viewpoints, *The Teaching of Reading*, examines the current debate about standards of attainment in reading, and the choice of methods in the teaching of reading to adults. Contributors assess the role of phonics, approaches to active reading and research on variation in reading development in early adulthood.

Price: £1.75
Postage: 1 copy 38p, 5 copies £2.00; 10 copies £3.15.

ALBSU's Annual Conference took place on June 25 at Glaziers Hall

"The White Paper, as most of you will know, specifically includes among the different areas of education for adults which the new funding councils will support 'full-time and part-time education for adults leading to the acquisition of basic skills (literacy and numeracy)'. That is testimony to the importance the Government attaches to basic skills teaching for adults."

"I know how much ALBSU's work in the field of basic skills is valued by teachers, students, local authorities and employers alike. The vigour and skill which ALBSU brings to bear on its work are of the highest order: in its consultancy and advisory services, its development of local literacy and numeracy projects for adults, its research, its training initiatives and its publications, ALBSU is recognised as a model of its kind."

The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke
Secretary of State for Education and Science

A Way With Numbers

From September a set of four videos from the popular BBC Education's numeracy series *A Way With Numbers* will be available for sale. Each video is accompanied by a self study booklet that offers activities for the learner. It will be of use to both learners and their tutors in a variety of contexts including those working towards Numberpower or other basic maths certification.

The four videos cover
- measurement
- money
- parts of a whole/time
- numbers/graphs

Cost: Individual copies £29.38 inclusive of VAT.
Order forms are available from: ALBSU, 229-231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA.

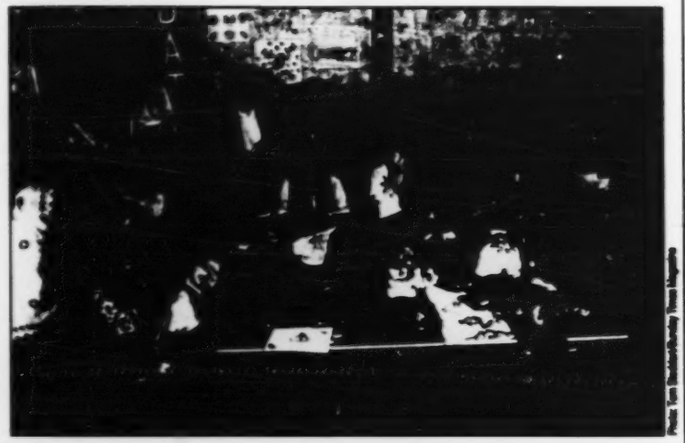
TELEVISION REPEATS

The full 20 × 25 minutes series of *A Way With Numbers* will be repeated on BBC-2 on Tuesdays at 12.55pm from September 17th 1991 to November 26th 1991 and 14th January 1992 to 24th March 1992.

Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative

The funding for the Basic Skills Accreditation initiative (BSAI) ends on August 31st 1991. From September 1st there will be no separate address and telephone number for BSAI and enquiries should be directed to ALBSU.

Award Winners



Members of the Mehfil–E–Tar co-operative

The Mehfil–E–Tar Women's Co-operative in Bedford won the community award in the *Working for Cities* award scheme, organised by the Arts Council and British Gas to celebrate the contribution of the arts to urban renewal. Members of the co-operative produce traditional Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi embroidery; their wall hanging *'Women bound together by yarn'* hangs in Bedford Town Hall.

The co-operative arose from work undertaken on a Special Development Project funded by ALBSU with Bedfordshire LEA. The aim of the project was to establish responsive provision for ethnic adults by developing better communication skills and consultative networks. The project's work in Bedford was led by Kanwal Pattar.

TEC Visit to Open Learning Centre

Ray Phillips (left) Head of Adult & Community Education, Evesham College; Bob Soley, Project Co-ordinator and Alan Curless, Chief Executive, Hereford & Worcester TEC.

The Chief Executive of Hereford and Worcester TEC, Alan Curless, visited the ESG funded Open Access Centre at Evesham early in May. The centre's co-ordinator, Bob Soley, thinks that the prospects for joint work are promising:

'Mr Curless was very keen to support our adult basic education work here and we're hoping to form a strong partnership with the Training and Enterprise Council in the future.'

TALKING DRAWINGS

A Strategy for Assisting Learners

Suzanne McConnell describes an imaginative strategy for making the most of prior knowledge, organising concepts and comparing perceptions. Suzanne has taught in literacy and basic education in Australia for twelve years: Penguin Books (Australia) has recently published her handbook *Improve Your Spelling*.

What mental picture do you have of a rainforest? Of the Greenhouse Effect? Of our solar system?

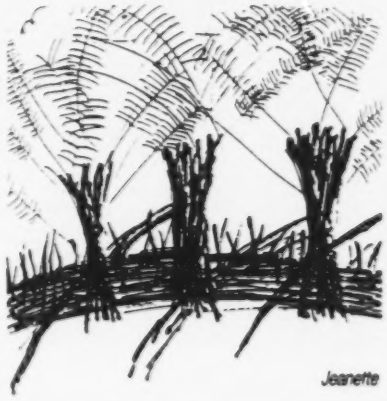
Have you ever seen a film of a story and felt disappointed or irritated or surprised at the way characters or settings have been portrayed? Have you ever watched a documentary and suddenly thought "That's not the way I imagined that!"

I would like to share with you a strategy that I've been developing which explores the mental images that we create and uses them as a bridge for connecting 'old' understandings with new information. The strategy is called Talking Drawings.

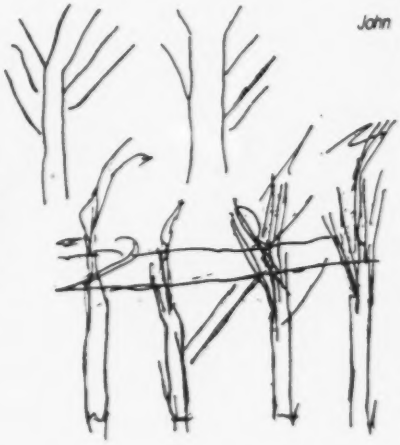
Before we continue, find a blank sheet of paper and draw your mental image of a rainforest.

Now look at the pictures below. These are some of the drawings of rainforests made by adult students in a basic English class. The drawings show not only the range of understandings that adult learners bring to a learning context but also provide some insight into those understandings.

Steve

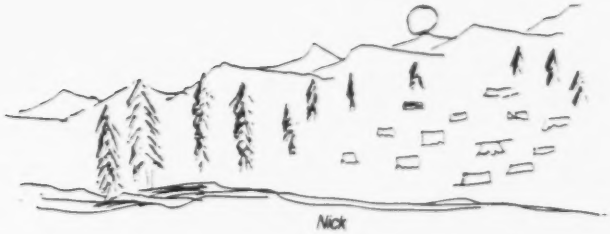


Jeanette

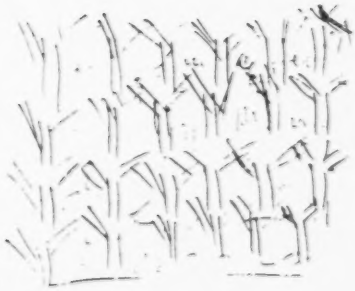


John

Rain Forests



Nick



Madeleine

Marie

Background to the Strategy

Talking Drawings began as a response to the moans and groans of adult students in a basic English class. At the time we were involved in discussing rainforests and conservation. I had asked the students to jot down anything they knew about rainforests. It was at that point that the groans began!

A major problem had become apparent – the students in that class were not confident writers. Several of them were very reluctant and unwilling writers who wrote as rarely and as little as possible. For these students, writing presents a number of serious concerns. They worry about spelling, anyone else seeing their writing, not being able to read their own writing and looking dumb.

While the students had been encouraged over many weeks to take risks with their writing (and spelling) and this had been happening, asking them to make this public was too large a request. With resigned expressions the students started to bring out their dictionaries and erasers and I realized just how easily the focus of attention can shift from ideas to conventions and how easily the real and valid purposes for an activity can be lost.

That was the first time that I tried using the students' drawings. They were quite comfortable showing their drawings and talking about them. There were quite a few giggles! It is worth remembering though that probably all of us would be able to laugh about our artistic abilities if these were made public. The same cannot be said of literacy.

Since then I've found that the strategy can be used very effectively with learners of any age and it has been trialled with various groups of learners including those mentioned as well as undergraduate primary teachers and primary school children. This strategy can be a useful alternative to writing, particularly for reluctant or unwilling writers.

Talking Drawings in Action: Example One

This example of Talking Drawings in action shows the steps that were following during the session focusing on rainforests.

STEP 1. The first sketch – Activating prior knowledge

The adult students were asked to draw their impressions of a rainforest. (I also made a drawing). Several students spontaneously drew arrows and labelled features.

As you have seen, the drawings show a wide range of understandings.

STEP 2. Sharing and comparing

The students shared their sketches with two other students in the class. They were asked to look for, and discuss, any similarities and differences between the features of the drawings.

STEP 3. Reflecting on prior knowledge

The whole class discussed the similarities and differences between the drawings. The discussion focused on what was known and how this was known. For example, two students commented that they had read newspaper headlines about logging and rainforests. This prompted other students to talk about magazines articles they'd read, radio interviews heard and so on.

STEP 4. Organising prior knowledge

The features expressed in the drawings and discussed by the group were listed on the board. From this list a concept map was developed by the group. The concept map was later transferred to a large sheet of paper to be referred to and added to by the students.

STEP 5. Reading the article

Multiple copies of an article describing rainforests were passed around and this was read individually and silently. During the reading many 'hmmms' and 'ohs' were heard as the students audibly related the new information to previous understandings. Discussion about the article erupted!

STEP 6. The second sketch – integrating learning

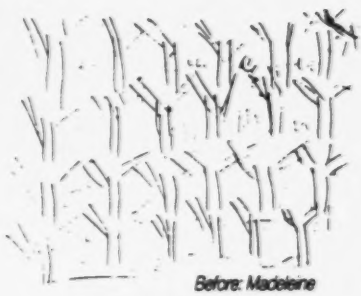
After the discussion about the article, the students were asked return to their drawings and to adapt or alter them in the light of the new information.

The two 'Before and After' drawings below made by Madeleine and Sam show the significant growth in understandings which occurred.

Some students threw out their earlier drawings and made new ones. All of the other drawings were changed in some way – by adding, erasing or modifying certain features.

STEP 7. Sharing and comparing

The students then shared their 'Before and After' drawings with other students. The discussion focused on the alterations made and the reasons for those changes. During this the students constantly referred to the article – reading aloud parts and talking about particular information in the article.



Before: Madeleine

After: Madeleine

Before: Sam

After: Sam

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

STEP 8. Following on

Several students went to the library during our coffee break and borrowed books about rainforests. I had also borrowed books. These were pored over by the students. Here are some of the comments that were made:

- here's some lichen . . . how come we don't say lit-chen?
- check out this fungus . . . is it poisonous?
- hey, there's a rainforest in Victoria!
- aren't they beautiful . . . so peaceful looking . . . so green . . . no wonder they call those people greenies . . .
- look at these orchids . . .

Example Two

Talking Drawings was used with another group of adults in a basic English class. On this occasion we had been discussing the Greenhouse Effect. The same steps were followed as in the first examples and once again the two 'Before and After' drawings made by Nick and Lynne show a growth in understandings.

An interesting point emerged during the drawings and discussion. There was some confusion in the students' knowledge about the Greenhouse Effect and the hole in the ozone layer. This is evident in Lynne's first drawing. Both of these issues had been receiving considerable media attention and it is likely that this concurrent coverage led to the confusion.

The Greenhouse Effect

Before: Lynne

After: Lynne

Using the Strategy

Talking Drawing can be used in a number of ways and for a range of purposes. These include:

- for assisting learners in examining and reflecting on prior knowledge and understandings;
- for assisting learners to draw on and organize their prior knowledge of a subject in a simple and concise way;
- for extending and enriching oral language;
- as a prereading activity for developing and defining purposes for reading;
- a positive way of sharing and comparing knowledge, understandings and ideas with other learners.

Other possibilities

This strategy can be used in many areas. Some of these possibilities are listed below.

General areas

- our solar system;
- an outline of a country;
- particular features of a country (e.g. states);
- geographical features such as a volcano, geyser, etc.

For learning about the ways texts are organised

- draw a Table of Contents without using any words;
- draw the front page of a newspaper (or magazine) without using any words;
- draw a page of a magazine (or novel, atlas, dictionary, etc) without words.

For learning about fiction

- character(s);
- settings(s);
- other features such as important artefacts.

Summary

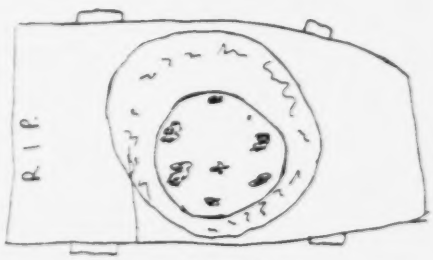
For teachers, Talking Drawings:

- can provide insight into the knowledge and understandings that learners already have;
- does not assume that learners who share similarities in age or experiences necessarily share the same understandings of a subject;
- can be used for a range of purposes – eg developing for reading; to introduce a topic; to explore attitudes and understandings;
- can be used in relation to specific tasks such as reading and writing fiction or non-fiction;
- can be used as an alternative to writing and to the teacher acting as scribe.

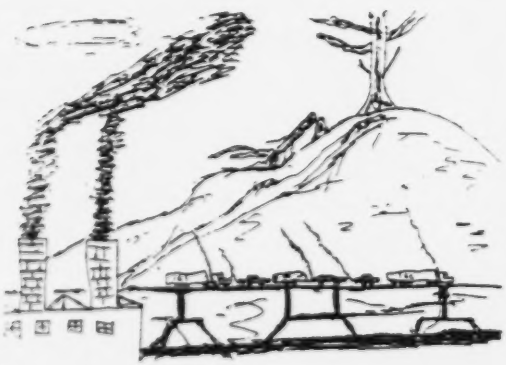
For learners, this strategy:

- provides a meaningful focus for language and literacy;
- provides a visible record (like writing) which can be reflected on, altered and developed;
- accepts and values the knowledge and understandings that each person brings;
- recognizes, accepts and values the different understandings of learners within a group.

Finally and most importantly, this strategy provides a visible bridge between old and new understandings. ■



Before: Nick



After: Nick

REVIEWS

An International Dictionary of Adult and Continuing Education

by Peter Jarvis

Published by Routledge, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC3P 4EE

Price: £80.00

ISBN 0 415 02421 8

This dictionary includes over 5000 references to historical and contemporary figures, organisations, movements and concepts in adult and continuing education. It is produced as a useful guide to those wishing to find their way through a wide and ever changing field. The publishers hope that it will become standard reference for anyone seeking information on the education of adults.

The selection used is the author's own, based on his experience and understanding of continuing education. He covers a wide and varied field, with a wealth of references to key organisations, educators, concepts, terminology, theories and ideas used throughout the world. The list is extensive and multi-dimensional, a feature which is perhaps best illustrated by looking at the heading on part of a typical page, quoted in alphabetical order and to which the book assigns three to four explanatory sentences each: Boletim Bibliografico do Mobral; Bond van Nederlandse volksuniversiteiten; book box; book club; bookmobile; Boston Literacy and Historical Association; Botswana National Adult Education Association; Boyd-Apps Model; B.Phil.; brainstorming and brain train. The complexity and heterogeneity of the entries illustrate both the comprehensiveness and scope of the field of continuing education and of the book.

I found the dictionary to be a useful guide and reference, measured against my own career development, and certainly would have found it particularly useful at transitional stages of professional development.

However, there are two possible limitations of which users should be aware. In using current published material to check against the scope and accuracy of this dictionary I became fully aware of the extensive use of acronyms. This is something the book does not deal with specifically. For instance, the researcher would need to know the full name of an organisation e.g. Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit before noting, in brackets, that this is also the organisation more commonly referred to as ALBSU.

Secondly, it has to be recognised that whilst publications of this type are being assembled, a whole new terminology is being introduced (certainly in the LEA sector), hence this dictionary does not include much of the post-ERA terminology that is now common usage in British systems. This is understandable for even as I write, major proposals for the reorganistion of funding mechanisms of further education will impact on that section of continuing education delivered at a local level.

The dictionary is a thorough and comprehensive study, offering an international perspective and an opportunity to enrich the user's understanding of the education of adults throughout the world. It is a useful tool kit of the contemporary adult educator.

Alistair Tranter
Senior Advisor for Continuing Education
Cheshire Education Authority

Language and Power

by Teachers with ILEA Afro Caribbean Language and Literacy project in Further and Adult Education

Published by Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich

Available from Language and Literacy Unit, Southwark College, Asylum Road, London SE15 2RJ

Price: £24.95

ISBN 0 7466 1927 8

This is a large, well illustrated book in three sections. Each section is a very rich source of information which is attractively presented.

Section 1 covers the history of standard English, in particular the way it has changed and developed through time and the many influences that have helped the language to reach its current form.

Section 2 looks at the languages of the world and compares English with other languages. The question of how certain languages came to be widely spoken across the world is addressed.

Section 3 gives a history of the Caribbean and explores the origins of Caribbean Creole languages.

In all three sections there is a wealth of information on historical, political and social factors which have shaped languages across the world. The subject matter is arranged so that each chapter has background information, materials for students' use and teacher's notes.

The student materials, (which are photocopiable) can be used in a variety of ways. I have used sections of the book in ABE volunteer training sessions to stimulate discussion about valuing students' language and to explore issues like grammar and spelling. There is accessible information and stimulus material on language and equality which I have found useful in helping to raise challenging questions about how language influences our view of ourselves and others. It has encouraged students to discuss their own use of language and their language background. It has helped to raise questions about why students compare their personal language unfavourably with what they referred to as 'proper' English.

Language and Power is informative, provocative and diverse, it raises some sensitive issues which should be discussed. I would certainly recommend it as an excellent new resource for ABE schemes, Colleges and Open Learning Centres. It is well worth the current cost of £24.95 for such a large and well produced book.

Gwynneth Whitehouse
ABE Organiser (Link Into Learning)
Leicestershire Education Authority.

Guide to the Monsters of the Mind

by Victor Grenko

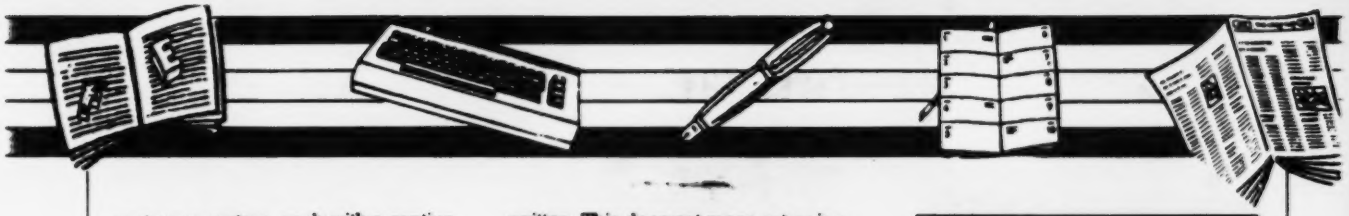
Published by Gatehouse Books, St Luke's, Sawley Road, Manchester M10 8DB

Price: £4.95

ISBN 0 906253 32 2

If you have ever had anxieties which have been difficult for you to handle, then you might just see a bit of yourself in Victor Grenko's colourful gallery.

A Guide to the Monsters of the Mind attempts to take a light-hearted look at the very serious subject of mental illness. Fears and anxieties are transformed into brightly coloured



cartoon monsters, each with a caption and a short description.

This A4 size book has 32 pages, with the illustrations grouped in fours on alternate pages. Opposite pages give guidance and help in the understanding of fears and worries.

The author explains that the book is like a ride on a ghost train through the mind. As we journey, we encounter 'The Desert Island', 'The Omnipotent Finger' and the 'Hygiene Pest' – to name just three out of a total of 44. He wonders whether we will recognise a bit of ourselves, or whether we will see a joke.

Most of the students who looked at this book liked it and were able to relate some of their own experiences to it. Only one student saw it as a joke. Unfortunately, the students with learning difficulties didn't understand what the book was about and had great difficulty deciphering the 'Picasso-like' pictures. This caused a lot of amusement.

I think this book is very thought provoking and could be useful to generate discussion on mental health. Having said this, however, I would be wary of using it with certain students for fear of provoking emotional responses which I do not feel qualified to deal with.

Generally speaking, I think this book is worth keeping on the shelf.

Doreen Devlin
ABE Open Learning Worker
Somerset Education Authority

Knowledge About Language

Edited by Ronald Carter

Published by Hodder & Stoughton

Price: £8.95

ISBN 0 340 54010 9

Are you ready for yet another acronym? Well, this book is all about KAL (Knowledge About Language). It is a collection of articles which address issues relating to language in education. It came out of the LINC (Language in the National Curriculum) Project and therefore many of the articles relate to schools and children. In spite of this, it has many ideas and concepts that are of interest and relevance to adult basic education.

The basic message of the book is the importance of raising learners' awareness of the language they use, whether it is spoken, heard, read or written. This does not mean returning to the formal grammar instruction that I remember in school but should start from the learner's own implicit knowledge about language. It underlines the empowering effect of knowing how we can use language and how others encode their messages. It stresses the importance of developing the learner's experiences of language and clarifies how learning about language and how to use it is a 'mutually informing relationship'.

Before you rush out to buy it, I must warn you that this book is not for the faint-hearted. I had to read the introduction with the aid of a dictionary, as it is peppered with terms such as: diatypic; diachronic; variation theory; frozen metaphors – to quote but a few. If you get past the difficult words, then there are sentences that make your brain cells go into overdrive (or on strike). For example, 'There can be no return to formalist, de-contextualised classroom analysis of language, nor to the deficiency pedagogies on which such teaching is founded'. There are impressive looking diagrams but they, too, were sometimes difficult to understand.

However, beyond all this there are useful and fascinating thoughts and ideas that it is appropriate for us to consider. We already use a number of learning tools that help to develop an understanding of language e.g. Language Experience, discussion, examining the relationship between spoken and written language etc., but are we always fully aware of what we are doing and do we use them to full advantage? Some of these articles made me think about the need to be more explicit about developing KAL with adult learners.

I have to confess that I have not read all the articles but those I would recommend are:

Critical Language Awareness in Action – Ros Ivanic (very accessible)

What Do We Mean By Knowledge About Language? – John Richmond

The New Grammar Teaching – Ronald Carter

English Teachers and the History of English – Pat and Mike O'Rourke

Recommended as a theoretical rather than practical read, for those who like that sort of thing.

Judy Vaughan
County ABE Training Co-ordinator
Wiltshire Education Authority

When Paths Meet

Compiled, written and illustrated by Gillian Paschkes Bell
Designs by Deborah Wickham

Published by Royal National Institute for the Blind

Price: £8.95

ISBN 0 901 791 88 1

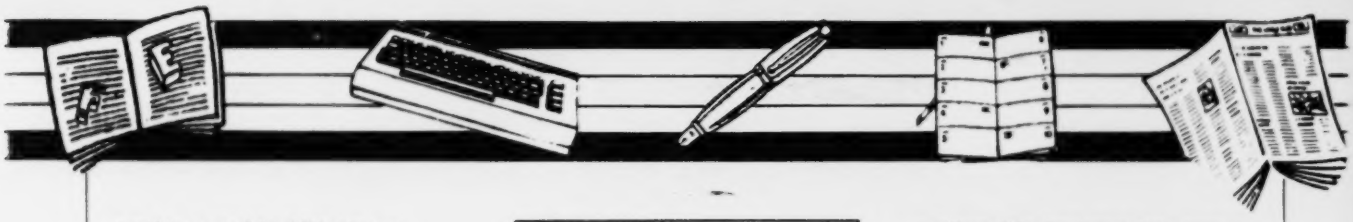
When Paths Meet is aimed at people who are learning English, whether sighted, blind or partially sighted and is obtainable in print, in contracted and uncontracted braille, as compact cassette and Talking Book.

This is a collection of stories written by students and staff of the English Language Programme at Loughborough about experiences of people from a variety of different cultural backgrounds. It covers a variety of topics such as 'Tales About Marriage', 'Disasters and Misfortunes' and 'Stories About Emigration' with a final section on 'British Festivals' as a source of information for ESOL learners plus a short glossary explaining a few difficult words and suggesting how students might find out the meanings of other words they don't know.

The layout of the book is very attractive with large clear print for the partially sighted which is also helpful for others acquiring reading skills. Stories are clearly set out, some with borders for edging or framing and others with line drawings to illustrate, all of which is complementary to the text.

The book is intended as a reader and there is no grading of the actual language used. It is not suitable for beginners and stories need to be carefully selected for elementary readers perhaps using the shorter stories which are line broken to make for easier reading. The longer stories with more complex structures would be useful for more advanced learners. In combined ABE/ESOL groups it would be an excellent source material for developing cultural understanding and awareness. Some readers may identify with the feelings and experiences of the writers, making it a particularly relevant resource for their learning situation.

Altogether, this is an attractive book to be read for enjoyment and interest. Although its large size (10½x11½) might make it difficult for shelf storage,



it will be a useful addition to any resource bank intended for basic skills, ESOL and visually impaired groups.

Carole Crompton and Jane Jordan
ESOL Co-ordinator and ESOL tutor/ trainer
Stockport Education Authority

Good Practice Guidelines for Adult Basic Education Part 3: Rural Areas

by Celine Castelino with contributions from ABE Organisers

Published by SCEC, West Coates House, 90 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5LQ

Price: £3.00

No ISBN

The Booklet (A5 with 23 pages) is designed for both practitioners and providers. It aims (and succeeds) in providing good practice guidelines for ABE in rural areas. It is based on the views, experiences and recommendations of ABE practitioners from all over Scotland.

While recognising the diversity of rural provision, it identifies the common features affecting it – greater distances, low population, lack of transport, meeting places, more emphasis on confidentiality and limited access to other adult education provision.

It sets examples of the above in rural context, provides profiles of ABE students, whose motivations are very familiar but again identifies the specific barriers they encounter in rural areas. It examines current practice relating to staff, training, publicity, confidentiality and meeting places. It gives examples of innovative approaches and finally provides recommendations, many of which are familiar to all good practice in ABE.

The specific recommendations to policy makers are close to any rural worker's heart and should be required reading. It is reassuring to read such a straightforward, logical publication, full of common sense and ideas. Many of the things stated are so obvious and yet need to be stated. A good document.

Jenny Hobbs
Adult Basic Education Organiser
Devon Education Authority

Microcomputer Review

Franklin Computer Spellmaster

Manufactured by Franklin Electronic Publishers Inc.

Available from Argo Stores and other retail outlets

Price: £54.50

No ISBN

This computer is described as, 'a portable speller and word list maker'. It has a built-in dictionary of 70,000 words, proper names and abbreviations. As well as giving help with spelling and crossword puzzles, it is programmed to play word games including 'Hangman', 'Anagrams' and 'Jumble'. It can also generate random numbers from 0 to 99 for playing 'Bingo' and has an electronic 1–5 dice. The keyboard has QWERTY letter lay-out similar to a typewriter.

The spelling aid functions by the user typing in the required word which is then displayed. If the word is spelt correctly the sign '*' appears. If the word is mis-spelt, the words 'MAKING LISTS' are displayed. It will then display a list of probable words which approximate to the mis-spelt word. The user can then select the required word. However, if the word first entered is 'way-off' on the phonetic attempt, the computer displays 'Sorry, cannot help', so another guess and entry is required. Alternatively, typing in the first part of the mis-spelt word, followed by dashes could produce the required word. For example, if HIPPO is entered, HIPPOPOTAMUS will be found in the subsequent displays.

The 'Hangman' game is played with the computer selecting a word, but displaying it as a series of dashes on the display. As each letter is typed in by the player, the letter, if present, appears on the relevant dash. If the letter is not included, a line on the hangman is drawn with a decrease in the digit counter (only ten guesses allowed). Words can be selected by the user for another player.

The 'Anagram' games enable the the user (or the computer) to display a word from which a number of different words can be found. The screen automatically displays the maximum number to be found.

We have found that the Spellmaster computer provides a faster answer to a spelling difficulty than a dictionary, so reducing frustration in writing English. The games are an added attraction and have educational value in increasing vocabulary and in the practice of correct spelling. In contrast to the tedious frustration of using a dictionary, the fun component in such a computer will most probably allow the student to persevere to find a correct spelling.

Christine Lardent & Evelyn Robson
West Sussex Education Authority

Wordpower: Support Materials

by Ann Benton

Published by Surrey County Council, Surrey Heath Adult Education Institute, France Hill Drive, Camberley, Surrey GU15 3QB

Price: £25.00 inc p&p

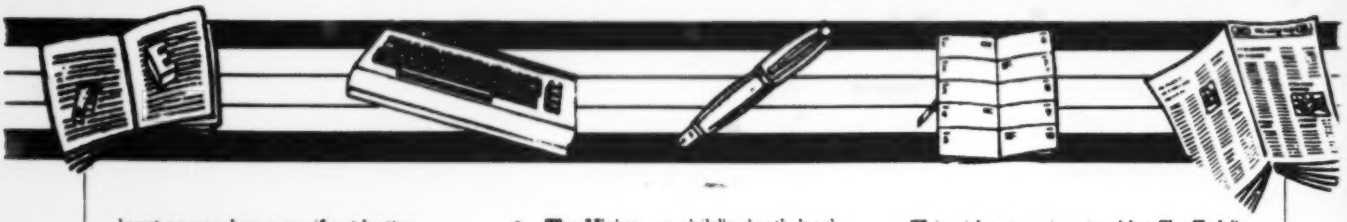
No ISBN

The pack consists of example assignments and worksheets, each based on an element of competence, very clearly laid out on the whole and providing a useful model, particularly for tutors new to Wordpower who may still be feeling intimidated by the wordiness of the City and Guilds booklets. The pack reassures the tutor that Wordpower is based on real work and, perhaps more importantly, gives an at-a-glance aid to help create assignments to match competence elements.

Used in conjunction with a project based approach such as demonstrated in 'Crediting Communication Skills', we can envisage tutors going to this pack to get ideas for infill assignments which have not been covered in project work or, in some instances, using the actual assignments in the pack.

On the whole the Stage 1 assignments are better suited to the appropriate student level. Students are more likely to be successful first time around if foundation tasks are simpler. The mix of handwriting, type and photocopying seems a bit cobbled on occasions. For instance, more use could have been made of blown up sections of timetable with a copy of the real one, small print and all, following.

The user friendliness of handwriting at foundation level is outweighed by the fact that the handwriting, whilst at



least as good as ours, if not better, could cause problems for many students who would easily confuse n/u, w/m and other letters. A lesson here for materials production in general.

These criticisms apart, if the materials are used as the author has intended, they are a very welcome resource. The pack is clear and easily photocopied which is important for tutors.

So, read the introduction first and then use the assignments to help package your work with students into the Wordpower framework. A pack in a centre as a tutor resource is well worth having.

Fidel Gillespie
Foundation Skills Trainer
Sheffield NACRO NCT and
Eric Pye, Studybase OLC
Sheffield Education Authority

Never Again
Where Have All My Teeth Gone?
The Vision

by Leicestershire Adult Basic Education Service

Published by Leicestershire County Council

Available from: Leicestershire Adult Basic Education Service, Room 409, County Hall, Glenfield, Leicester LE3 8RF.

Price: 98p each

No ISBN

This is a set of three readers for basic reading students. Each book contains one short story on four pages of clear, fairly well-spaced type, and two pages of relevant, simple line drawings. The stories concern interesting, thought-provoking, real life situations:

- **Never Again** – a woman walking out alone at night.
- **Where Have All My Teeth Gone?** – a child's reaction to parents' "white" lies.
- **The Vision** – a child's death-bed vision.

Surprisingly, these topics did not seem to arouse much interest in my basic readers. The reading was quite hard with, sometimes, quite complicated sentences. I think students felt they had done enough once they had read a book – and perhaps they had!

I used the books more successfully with the more functional readers in the group. Reading was easier at this level and some quite interesting discussions, both individually and in small groups, ensued. In some cases these discussions led to similarly interesting pieces of writing.

The books have the appearance of many other cheap, centre-produced, small books. The covers are dull and unattractive, with little to make a student want to read them. When put on a book rack they were, to my knowledge, not chosen.

I like the idea of presenting life-based issues in simple books. However, I think these books need to be more attractively produced and perhaps, for basic readers, a bit easier. If meant for slightly better readers they ideally need to have more content to them.

C.A. Sperry
Adult Basic Education Tutor
South Glamorgan Education Authority

Short Notices

Thank you – that's all I knew

by Sheffield's Yemeni Community

Available from: Sheffield Film Co-op, Brown Street, Sheffield S1 2BS

Price: For sale or hire at varying prices to suit budgets from £15.00 plus VAT

No ISBN

This video was inspired by Sheffield's Yemeni Literacy Campaign which was launched in 1988. The video follows the development of the campaign and its participants over several months. Members of the Yemeni community talk about their literacy and language needs in the context of their history as a colonised people in Aden and their experiences of life in Sheffield. It provides an interesting and rare profile of a significant minority group in a large industrial city.

Also Received

No Worries In Wales

Various

Published by St Anne's Shelter and Housing Association, St Anne's Centre, 66 York Street, Leeds LS9 8AA

Price: £1.80

No ISBN

Frederick Douglas and Sojourner Truth

by Marie Stuart

Published by Central Bristol Adult Education Centre, 189c Newfoundland Road, Bristol BS2 9NY

ISBN 1 873115 01 6
1 873115 00 8

Write On Read On

Various

Published by Strathclyde Regional Council, Department of Education, Argyll and Bute Division, Regional Offices, Alexandra Parade, East Bay, Dunoon PA23 8AJ

No ISBN

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in November, February, May and July. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor, at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic education.

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA. Tel: 071-405 4017. Fax: 071-404 5038.

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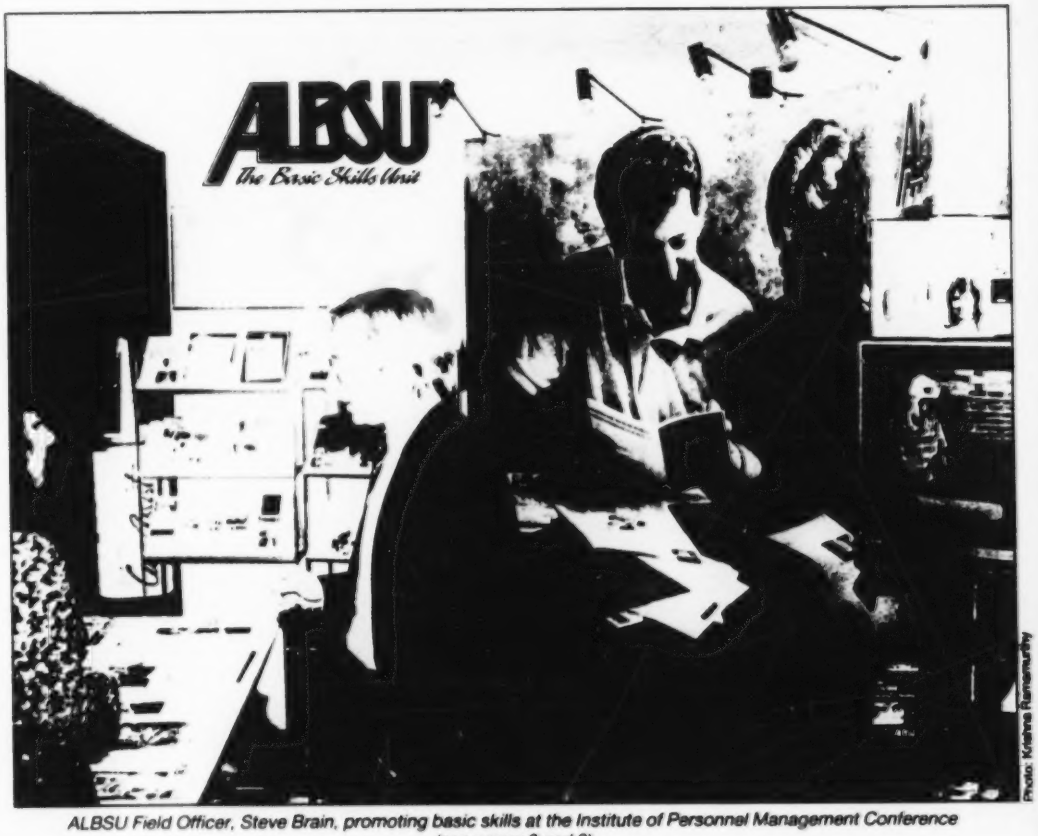
NEWSLETTER

ALBSU

The Basic Skills Unit



ALBSU Field Officer, Steve Brain, promoting basic skills at the Institute of Personnel Management Conference
(see pages 8 and 9)

USING STAFF TRAINING TO IMPROVE QUALITY
PAGE 2

PAGE 4

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT STYLES OF LITERACY PROVISION
PAGE 10

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

USING STAFF TRAINING TO IMPROVE QUALITY

There's been a lot of interest in the idea of a 'kite mark' for basic skills and ESOL providers mentioned in the last issue of the Newsletter. A number of people have contacted ALBSU and asked what might be involved in a 'kite mark'.

VARIATION IN QUALITY

We haven't finally made up our mind yet about 'kite marking' in basic skills and ESOL but it does have a number of attractions. Primarily a 'kite mark' would be a way of ensuring standards of service and performance and making sure that every potential student gets the kind of service we could all be proud of. Too often, at present, it's a matter of luck and geography whether someone gets high quality tuition or something of really very poor quality.

Basic skills and ESOL provision has got better. However, quality is variable and the standard of what is available is patchy, not just between different LEAs but often, more worringly, in the same LEA area. What's true about LEA provision also holds good for training managers providing basic skills and language training as part of Youth Training or Employment Training, for different voluntary organisations, between prisons and in the limited provision which exists in industry. Quality control has been too low on the agenda and it's often been unclear who is responsible for ensuring quality – the individual tutor, the centre, the LEA or a mixture of all of these.

Improving standards is not easy particularly in a service often poorly funded, reliant on the good will of overstretched staff and on the margin of education and training. It's not all pessimistic, however. It's worth repeating that the quality of basic skills and ESOL has got better. In part this has been due to central initiatives such as ALBSU Development Projects (84 LEAs have had projects since 1985), partly to consultancy and advisory work (we have carried out major Consultancy reviews for 36 LEAs in the last three years) and partly due to a mixture of staff training, improved learning material and improved knowledge about what makes effective provision.

Other central initiatives have helped; the Employment Department has taken measures to improve basic skills in YT and ET and the DES WOED funded Open Learning Centres have offered a real choice to students, as well as acted as a model for other provision. (Recent research indicates, for instance, that Open Learning Centres almost always have clear aims and objectives and specific targets, whilst most basic skills provision still has to develop these).

Central initiatives would have been little use, however, without the support and commitment of people working locally. Much of the improvement in quality has been due to the effort of local practitioners. Most local practitioners, although often overstretched, have been keen to improve their skills and get a higher profile and a better understanding of the need for basic skills and ESOL amongst elected members and senior officers.

We haven't done enough about ESOL and it's often looked like an after thought latched on to adult literacy. Some problems are similar, but ESOL and literacy are not identical; nor are the needs; nor are some of the solutions. We are still hopeful that some specific funding will be available to support ESOL development next year because, without some more money, it's doubtful whether the limited resources available will allow the level of development needed.

QUALITY STANDARDS AND STAFF TRAINING

One of the elements of a 'kite mark' for basic skills and ESOL will almost certainly be well trained, qualified staff. We have said before basic skills and ESOL is no place for the well meaning amateur. Yet the quality control of entry to teaching these essential skills has not always been as good as it should have been. Too often satisfying the need for prospective and serving tutors to 'feel good' has been more important than ensuring that high quality teaching is available for every student. It's still all too common to meet volunteers and paid teachers who claim that they have no need for training or that the training available is too long, too demanding or too far away. This attitude is frankly unacceptable and we need to deter such people from becoming involved in basic skills and ESOL.

While ALBSU isn't responsible for the training of staff, we have spent a good part of our grant providing additional training for basic skills staff over the last 10 years. Largely this has been through Regional Training Programmes and these have done much to develop a network in basic education, as well as provide opportunitities for people from different LEAs to get together. Much of the training organised regionally has been based on a 'cascade' approach; people attend and pass on the information, knowledge and skills to other people working locally. This worked to some extent when basic skills was not so extensive and diverse, but the nature of provision now (with a large number of part-time and voluntary staff working in a number of different places) means that it will work less effectively in the future. So we will be moving away from this approach in the next year.

"We are clear that staff training will be one of the elements of a 'kite mark' for basic skills and ESOL. Trained staff are essential if the quality of performance and service to students is to be assured. We will invest in making certain that staff and volunteers have access to high quality training, set against nationally recognised standards."

The change in strategy also had to take account of the fact that the funding available through GEST for basic skills training (£480,000 in 1991-92) will not continue in 1992-3. We therefore had to plan in such a way as to avoid a potentially sharp decline in training provided.

ACCREDITATION

The other major factor which has influenced a change of strategy in staff training has been the development of accreditation. We believe that accreditation will do much to help improve the quality of basic skills and ESOL. Ensuring that teachers and tutors have received initial training, nationally recognised and set against agreed standards of performance, will mean that fewer people who shouldn't be teaching in basic skills and ESOL are involved. We don't let people drive unless they have reached a standard of competence; similarly we shouldn't let people teach unless they have achieved a level of knowledge and skills which is nationally recognised.

We have taken a number of initiatives in recent years to improve the standards of staff training and introduce a credible system of accreditation in basic skills. It's not been without its problems, but increasingly the Initial Certificate is the expectation for anyone involved in basic skills and over 5,000 people have received accreditation from City and Guilds since the Initial Certificate was launched.

We are introducing a similar pre-service Initial Certificate for ESOL in the next few months as well as adding an ESOL module to the existing Initial Certificate to allow areas where there is limited demand for ESOL to provide some initial training. ALBSU is committed to an all accredited workforce and certainly this will be one of the elements of a 'kite mark'. If you are not willing to undertake 30 hours of training and reach the standards demanded for beginning to work in basic skills or ESOL, then you shouldn't be allowed to teach. It might be tough but there is little evidence that more lax standards have produced assured quality for students.

We also introduced a competence based accreditation scheme for more experienced basic skills and ESOL staff three years ago. This was operated regionally and it's fair to say that it has had some 'teething' problems. We are not used to competence based training in basic skills and ESOL. Most training has been through courses of specified length and fairly traditional in conception and delivery. Competence based accreditation recognises that skills and knowledge may be acquired through a number of experiences, not just through specific training, and that people usually start off with different levels of skill. Assessment of Prior Experience and Learning (APEL) is an essential feature of competence based accreditation and perhaps we underestimated the difficulty and unfamiliarity of this when we introduced the regionally based Certificate.

It has become clear that without guidance on APEL, the time taken to complete the Certificate has often been longer than should be necessary.

It's also been expensive. Not expensive when compared with much training offered to senior staff in education, but seemingly expensive compared to other training available in basic skills and ESOL. (It's actually very difficult to compare the cost of training based on different approaches).

DEVELOPMENTS

We are strengthening the Certificate and making it more widely available. For instance, more centres will be able to register with City and Guilds to offer the Certificate (there's no reason why a college or LEA adult education centre can't register) and this should mean that the fee will go down. We will also clarify the standards which need to be reached to receive the Certificate as well as provide training in APEL.

We are increasing the amount of money we spend on staff training in the next few years. And more people should benefit. One of the problems with regional training was that too few people benefited (only about 1,500 training places were available each year) and that the investment in staff training was not reflected in the outcome. ALBSU will be providing financial support via LEAs to help fund initial training courses leading to the Initial Certificate as well as providing some support for people taking the in-service Certificate. We are committed to providing this support for the next two years and we have allocated about one third of a million pounds for this support.

We are also intending to provide some training for key staff in basic skills and ESOL. Organisers and co-ordinators play a crucial role in basic skills and ESOL and we need to make sure that they are aware of the latest developments as well as have access to management training and accreditation, just like colleagues in other sectors of post-school education and training. There's lots more going on (including looking at alternative training methods to the traditional event and course); too much to set out in one article.

We are clear that staff training will be one of the elements of a 'kite mark' for basic skills and ESOL. Trained staff are essential if the quality of performance and service to students is to be assured. We will invest in making certain that staff and volunteers have access to high quality training, set against nationally recognised standards. We may not get it right immediately but we have a long term commitment to improving standards of staff training, to improve the standard of basic skills and ESOL work.

ESOL IN RURAL AREAS

adapting ABE to meet the needs

Catherine Sauzier, Community Education Tutor, Cambridgeshire and Judith Woodlock, Study Support Co-ordinator, Gloscat, offer ideas, drawn from their own experience, on supporting ESOL work in areas where there is no specialist provision.

Meeting needs

Are you an ABE organiser and/or tutor?

Do you work in a rural area where there is no local ESOL provision?

Are you attempting to meet the literacy needs of adults who do not speak English as their first language?

If so, then this article is offered as a prompt for further discussion; that is to say that the contributors would welcome any further comments, suggestions or reflections.

It is based on the experience of two ESOL organisers working in Cambridgeshire and Gloucestershire, where the total number of adults seeking help with English is relatively low and where many live in geographical isolation of formal community networks . . . they may even have become invisible to all but a few service providers. It has therefore proved essential to develop an effective network of information between agencies and, where necessary, to develop a flexible response to local needs. This means providing practical support for individual organisers and tutors, so that individual students can be encouraged to make the most of all available learning opportunities.

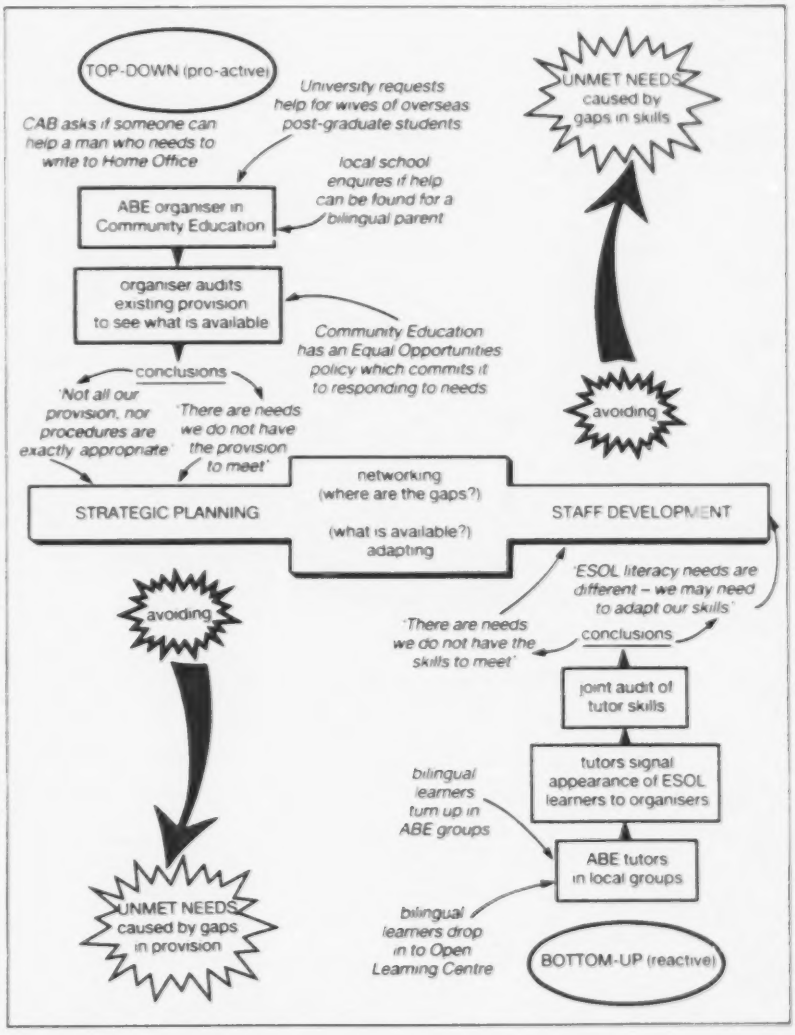
When the delivery of ESOL is organised through discrete provision, it draws on its own network of information to attract students and support tutors (ideally, having offered a choice of provision, it should also move students on into the mainstream). In areas where numbers do not apparently justify the organisation of separate ESOL classes, ABE groups will often be viewed as a suitable alternative – by the learner, by the organiser or by a third party acting as a referral agent.

If ABE provision is asked to respond to the needs of ESOL learners, then organisers and tutors alike are faced with the challenge of developing an effective response in a situation where numbers are small, funding may be limited and yet the range of learning needs is exceedingly wide. A visual representation of the process may help to focus attention on some of the issues involved. (See Figure 1).

Organisers may approach the challenge through strategic planning, while tutors may see the primary need as one of staff development. Either way, in those areas where it is not feasible to develop a separate ESOL service, an alternative response may be developed through the two-pronged approach described in Figure 1.

It is important to distinguish between the two levels at which the main issues will be raised. (See Figure 2).

Figure 1


TOP-DOWN (pro-active)
University requests help for wives of overseas post-graduate students
CAB asks if someone can help a man who needs to write to Home Office
local school enquires if help can be found for a bilingual parent
ABE organiser in Community Education
organiser audits existing provision to see what is available
Community Education has an Equal Opportunities policy which commits it to responding to needs
conclusions
'Not all our provision, nor procedures are exactly appropriate'
'There are needs we do not have the provision to meet'
UNMET NEEDS caused by gaps in skills
avoiding
networking
(where are the gaps?)
(what is available?)
adapting
STRATEGIC PLANNING
STAFF DEVELOPMENT
'ESOL literacy needs are different – we may need to adapt our skills'
'There are needs we do not have the skills to meet'
conclusions
joint audit of tutor skills
tutors signal appearance of ESOL learners to organisers
bilingual learners turn up in ABE groups
ABE tutors in local groups
avoiding
UNMET NEEDS caused by gaps in provision
bilingual learners drop in to Open Learning Centre
BOTTOM-UP (reactive)

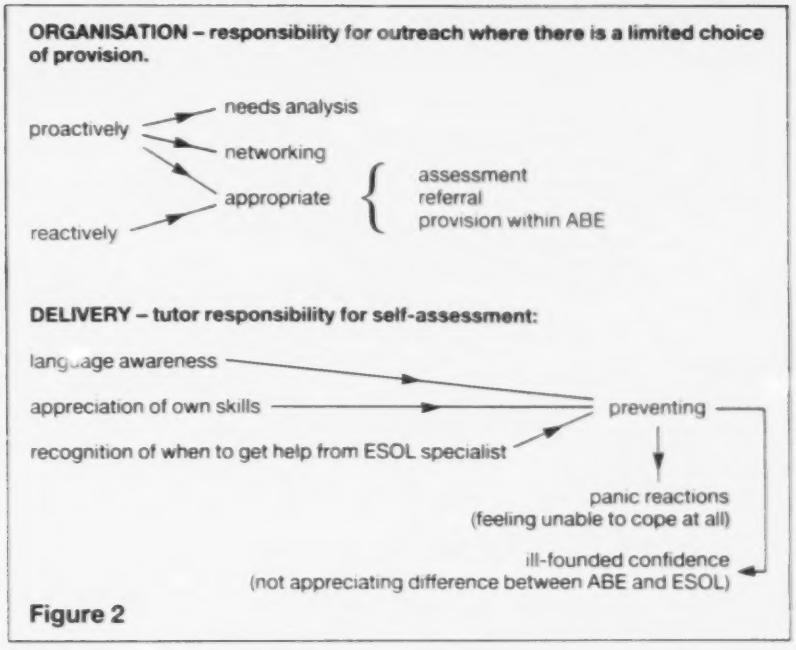


Figure 2

Organisation

Before embarking on a local audit of needs and/or existing provision, ABE organisers may find it helpful to refer to the following checklist of questions:

Needs analysis:

- how do you know who lives where and in what circumstances?
- what are the numbers involved?
- who may hold the necessary information?

Publicity:

- how do you publicise your service at present?
- how do you ensure that you are reaching as wide a range of potential learners as possible?

Networking:

- who is in regular contact with you?
- how do you know where the gaps may be?
- what else is available locally?
- what is the potential for collaboration with other agencies?

Assessment:

- what is really being assessed?
- what assumptions are being made in current procedures?
- is there a clear distinction between literacy and linguistic competence?
- whom do you consult when identifying learning needs?

Methodology:

- do you avoid stereotypes in your attitudes to ESOL learners?
- what can *you* learn from ESOL learners?

Materials:

- do the materials offer a positive image of other cultures?
- is the range of structures and vocabulary at the right level?

Training:

- can tutors be supported through further training?
- who is going to organise the training?
- is additional funding available?

Referral:

- what other provision is available?
- how supportive is the referral process?
- is the learner consulted when decisions are made?

Networking to fill the gaps

Data is available both within the County Council (e.g. Social Services departments, further education colleges, schools, pre-school providers) and from other agencies based near by urban centres (e.g. Health Service, bilingual communities, Race Equality Councils). Building such a picture will in itself start the networking process. It will also provide a useful cross-reference for the 1991 Census figures – once staff in policy/planning/research departments of the county councils have finished studying and interpreting them.

It is also worth investigating what opportunities are being offered by other agencies, to which ESOL learners could be referred or with whom collaborative ventures could be developed (e.g. local further education colleges, English as a Foreign Language centres, voluntary providers, staff in health and social services, women's support groups, unemployed workers' centres).

As with ABE, the best publicity is by word of mouth, so the wider your network, the more effective you are likely to be. But be prepared to note and discuss signs of racism in the local community – it can be overt or may take the form of 'colour blindness'; in either case it is likely to be entrenched and be a contributory factor in the low profile habitually maintained by many ESOL learners.

The expense of training organisers and staff who are scattered over a wide geographical area is likely to be prohibitive. One option may be to buy in training using existing networks as a framework (e.g. Regional Advisory Councils, Open Colleges). But if this results in excessive travel expenses, then it may be possible to break down the training need into separate issues and look for local trainers with specific expertise (e.g. equal opportunities advisers, TEFL trained language teachers).

Adapting what is available

ABE provision has traditionally dealt with learners who have not previously had a positive experience of formal education. But many ESOL learners are already fully literate in at least one other language. Unless their previous educational achievements are recognised, they may find themselves forced into a deficiency model by the very people who are claiming to help them. If existing ABE procedures, techniques, publicity and materials are to be adapted, then organisers and tutors must be prepared to put themselves back into a learning situation; this could mean developing formal training programmes, consulting more widely or simply developing a knack for asking the right questions.

Delivery

If, as a tutor, you are in any doubt about the relevance of tutor responsibilty for self-assessment, then please read the examples in Figure 3, on page 6.

Having looked at each example of writing, ask yourself the questions in Figure 4.

Having reached this point, it is worth looking again at the three examples of writing contributed by learners from one rural area. Is it immediately obvious:

- who learned English before coming to this country and who arrived without a word of English?
- who has been living here for over ten years and who arrived only last year?

When I arrived at the English airport I was very amazed because everything was new and fashionable

When I walked to the checkout the immigration official asked me questions, I couldn't understand all of them. Then a chinese girl explained the English for me. Then I was able to go out of the airport after that.

When I had soon my husband, I asked him, 'What can I do because I don't understand any English!', my husband said to me, 'you can learn English here!'

I was not well yeastoday because got hadget headache. but I try todo today my home work some time Can't mang by my self I did some volunteers work over welcame with I hope next few weeks my writing get

I Get up at 9 o'clock in the morning and I had cup of tea Then after I do my house work I finish my house work at 12 o'clock Then I make a lunch for my husband & sometime we finish our lunch after ad I go out to do my shopping Then I come here and make a Tea for my husband Because he finish his work at 5 o'clock.

Finish
Finish
Finish
Finish sometimes

morning
morning
morning

Finish

Figure 3

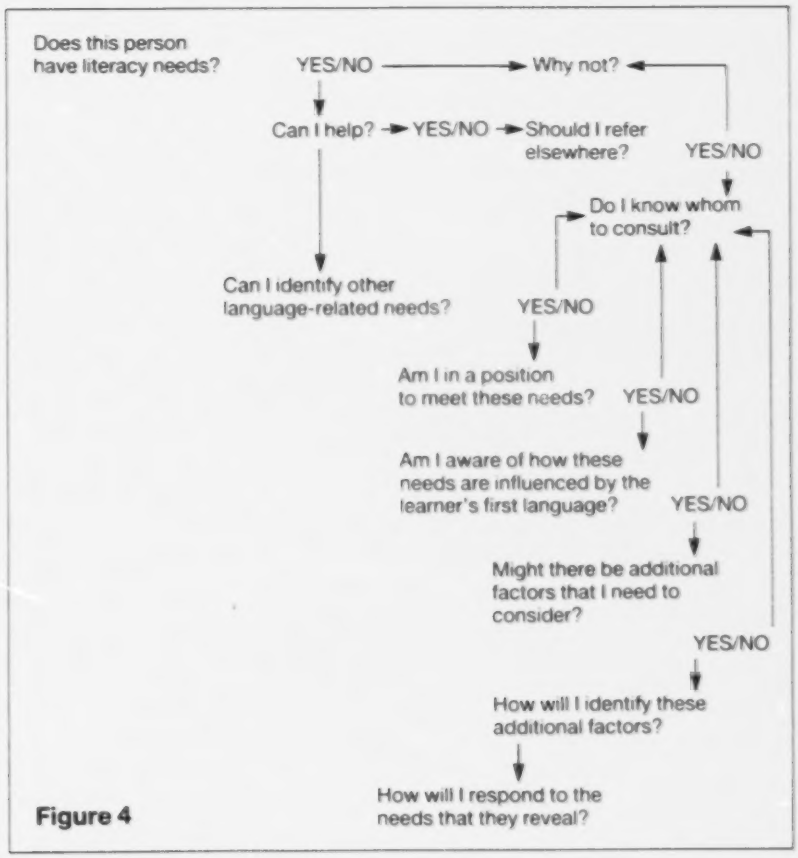

Does this person have literacy needs?
YES/NO
Why not?
Can I help?
YES/NO
Should I refer elsewhere?
YES/NO
Do I know whom to consult?
Can I identify other language-related needs?
YES/NO
Am I in a position to meet these needs?
YES/NO
Am I aware of how these needs are influenced by the learner's first language?
YES/NO
Might there be additional factors that I need to consider?
YES/NO
How will I identify these additional factors?
How will I respond to the needs that they reveal?

Figure 4

- who has a lot of contact with English and who rarely uses English outside the classroom?
- who speaks English with confidence and who does not appear to understand very much?
- who can write in a totally different script and who is not literate in any other language?
- who has been a college lecturer and who has never been to school?
- whose lifestyle has most dramatically changed since coming to this country?

It is important to ask questions such as these, because in seeking the answers you may be encouraged to reassess the effectiveness of materials and methodology used in *your* ABE group. To what extent do they:

- use the adult learner's first language as a resource?
- build on the adult learner's existing skills?
- reflect a lifestyle that is shared by the adult learner?
- recognise the adult learner's own cultural values?

Reading for meaning

The three letters are from Woman's Realm (14 May 1991). They are examples of reading material recently used with an ESOL learner attending an ABE group.

Road Safety

Travelling on the motorway recently we passed a five car pile-up. It was a pitiful sight of destruction and chaos and yet, in the fast lane, cars continued to fly by at 90 miles an hour. The following day a car went into the back of ours, causing nearly £1,000 worth of damage. This is the third time such an accident has happened in three months.

What is happening to our country's drivers? Is arriving at our destination on time more important than the lives and property of others?

Reprinted by permission of Woman's Realm.

Technobore

While waiting for a friend to join me in a restaurant I couldn't help observing a couple next to me apparently deep in conversation. The man was explaining the complex world of hi fi. His partner, chin in hand, appeared to be engrossed in what he was saying, but obviously her eyes glazed over as he stopped to ask, 'I'm not boring you, am I?' She gave a slight start and exclaimed, 'Oh no! I wasn't listening.'

Funny of the week

My friend was walking past the local registry office when her young daughter noticed the confetti lying on the pavement.

'Oh, Mummy,' she remarked, 'I wish I could go to a wedding and throw graffiti.'

The tints represent areas of difficulty (either comprehension or pronunciation). You can assume that the level of English was generally appropriate, but think about the way in which learner progress can be helped or hindered by the subsequent strategic choices set out in Figure 5.

Some general points

Since tutor-learner contact time is likely to be limited, it is important to encourage learners to view the outside world as a potential resource for language learning. However, learning English in this country can be a very depressing experience: it feels like a never-ending process – the more you learn, the more conscious you become of how much more there is to learn! And to crown it all, it only takes one crisis situation for your mind to go a complete blank – just when it really matters, you seem to have forgotten most of what you thought you had learned!

So tutors need to help learners focus on the positive rather than the negative – individual strengths and achievements rather than weaknesses and deficiencies. They also need to concentrate on what motivates each learner to keep going when things start getting difficult.

Learners can be helped to become more responsible for their own learning if:

- they are encouraged to use their preferred language as a resource and (where appropriate) to use bilingual dictionaries to check understanding
- they are allowed plenty of time to think out what they want to say and/or write (i.e. don't be tempted to rush in and supply the answer too readily)
- every opportunity is seized to base class work on individual difficulties experienced in the outside world (the more immediately relevant the content, the more easily it will be assimilated)
- they are actively involved with learning strategies (why am *I* learning English? what do *I* hope to achieve in the long term? what do *I* need to be able to do in order to get there? where am *I* going to start? what is going to help *me*? what is going to make it more difficult? how will *I* know when it's time to move on to the next stage?)
- they are made to feel that they have something to contribute (everybody likes to be listened to, just as everybody likes to feel that they have something to teach)
- they are encouraged to share their experiences with other learners (over-dependence on one-to-one contact with a tutor can be a powerful drug – isolating and habit-forming . . .).

You may find some useful guidelines for building confidence and developing learners' study skills in the following:

ALBSU, *Literacy work with bilingual students* (a resource for tutors)

ALBSU, *ESL/Literacy* (an introductory handbook for tutors)

NEC, *Self-Access Worksheets*, vols. 1 &2

NEC, *Self-Access Grammar*

NEC, *Help Yourself to English*, vols. 1 to 5 plus introduction.

NEC, *Time after Time* (with tape).

NEC, *Coping with the System*

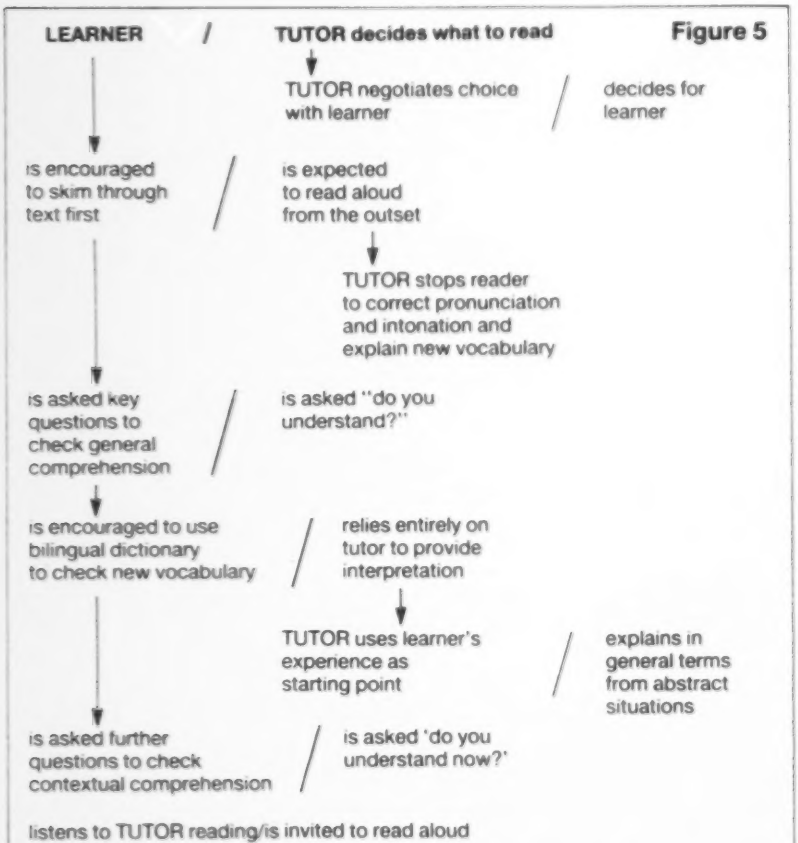
NEC, *Writing a CV*.

If you do not know of any local ESOL organiser whom you can consult further, you may find it useful to contact NATECLA (the National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults), as it provides a network of information across the country. You can write to the administrative assistant (Kathleen Jenkins) at: NATECLA National Centre, Hall Green College, 520-524 Stratford Road, Birmingham B11 4AJ. (Tel: 021-766 6327).

Conclusion

Meeting ESOL needs in rural areas represents a challenge to which there are no easy solutions. ABE skills, knowledge and values provide an invaluable resource, but organisers and tutors will have to guard against two dangers – becoming complacent about their ability to meet needs and, at the opposite end of the spectrum, becoming frozen into a state of inaction by feelings of inadequacy. Voicing doubts and knowing what questions to ask can be a good starting-point, while encouraging collaboration with other agencies can become an effective vehicle for initiating change. But there is no substitute for knowing when the time has come to refer to the ESOL specialist. ■

Figure 5

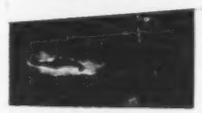

LEARNER / TUTOR decides what to read
TUTOR negotiates choice with learner / decides for learner
is encouraged to skim through text first / is expected to read aloud from the outset
TUTOR stops reader to correct pronunciation and intonation and explain new vocabulary
is asked key questions to check general comprehension / is asked "do you understand?"
is encouraged to use bilingual dictionary to check new vocabulary / relies entirely on tutor to provide interpretation
TUTOR uses learner's experience as starting point / explains in general terms from abstract situations
is asked further questions to check contextual comprehension / is asked 'do you understand now?'
listens to TUTOR reading/is invited to read aloud
NB: learner finding certain words difficult to pronounce may find it easier to work back from the end of the word (e.g. "–tion, –ruction, –truction, –struction, destruction').

Information

PUBLICATIONS

Rock Biographies

TINA TURNER



BOB DYLAN

The Royal National Institute for the Blind have reproduced five of the ALBSU Rock Biographies in Braille and audio cassette tape versions. The five artists featured are:

- Madonna
- Elvis Presley
- U2
- Tina Turner
- Bob Dylan

Prices: the Braille books are 60p each. Audio cassette tapes are available on loan to members of the cassette library of RNIB.

Materials and information on P&P charges available from: Customer Services, RNIB, PO Box 173, Peterborough PE2 0WS.

Open Learning

ALBSU has just published a report on the Open Learning Centres in England and Wales. The report details organisation and practice in Open Learning Centres and covers topics including staffing, resources, materials and information on student take up and use of the centres.

Individual copies available free, from ALBSU. Please send A4 SAE (49p) to the Unit.

PROMOTING BASIC SKILLS

Photo credits: Labour conference – David Kamplerer; Liberal Democrat conference – D. Chung; Conservative conference – David Carroll

ALBSU staff Alison Murphy, Krishna Ramamurthy, Jim Pateman, Stephen Wallace and Kauser McCallum, raised the issue of basic skills with politicians at the party political conferences this Autumn.

AWARDS

Major Award for The Reading Disc

'The Reading Disc', a CD-ROM XA application produced by Cambridge Training and Development and Next Technology in conjunction with ALBSU, was awarded the Best Application for Education at the European Conference and Exhibition on Multimedia and CD-ROM, 9-11 September 1991, at Wiesbaden. The award was given for high quality and innovation in education.

(The CD-Rom project was outlined in Newsletter No. 41).

Award Winners – Skelmersdale College Project

Photo: Ormskirk Advertiser

Trevor Johnson, Richards & Appleby's Managing Director, pictured with course organisers as he presents certificates in Communication Skills to employees.

Skelmersdale College's ALBSU and LEA funded workplace learning project has been included in the National Training Awards scheme for 1991.

The 'Training at Work' initiative was submitted in May and the factory was visited by the judges in August.

The company's training submission has been selected for a North West Regional winners award to be presented by the Duke of Westminster in January 1992.

Photo: Tony Othen

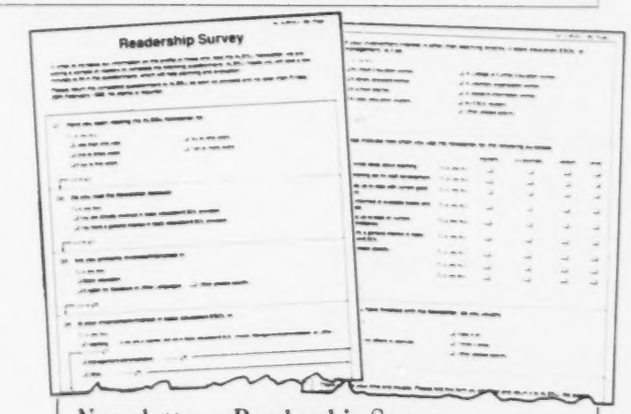
Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, Patron of ALBSU, talking with Jane Martin, Secretary, and Alan Wells, Director, on a recent visit to see the work of the Unit and to meet members of staff and the Board of Management.

Wordpower/Numberpower & LCCI

The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examinations Board is intending to offer awards in communication skills and numeracy based on the standards developed through the Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative. They hope to launch the certificates in January 1992. They require Consultants/Verifiers in all parts of the country to advise on and monitor assessment. Consultants will monitor all assessment procedures in centres to establish reliability and validity. Experienced practitioners who are familiar with the standards should send a CV outlining their qualifications and experience to:

LCCI Examinations Board, Marlowe House, Station Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 7BJ.

Wordpower and Numberpower will continue to be offered by City and Guilds. This development is part of the original intention to make the standards available through a variety of different awarding bodies.



Newsletter – Readership Survey

In order to increase our information on the profile of the Newsletter's readers we have included a Readership Survey form in 20% of the copies of this issue. If your copy contains the survey, please help us by returning it.

Rotary International – Year of Functional Literacy

This year (July 1991-1992) the President of Rotary International, Rajendra Saboo of India, has made functional literacy a particular priority and this is being reflected by Rotary Clubs throughout the world.

There are 1,700 Rotary Clubs in this country whose members are key business people in local communities. This focus on literacy should provide an opportunity to raise general awareness amongst this influential group of people.

Local basic education schemes may want to explore with local Rotarians ways in which they can help. For example, professional expertise in such areas as publicity and recruitment, new technology, fund raising and public speaking could be particularly beneficial.

Newsletter Index

ALBSU has just compiled an Index of articles and Inserts published in the Newsletter from 1980 to 1991. It is likely to be particularly useful for co-ordinators and those responsible for training. Copies are now being distributed to authorities. If you require an additional copy send an A4 SAE (34p) to the Unit.

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT STYLES OF LITERACY PROVISION

What makes provision more – or less – effective? From 1989 to 1991 ALBSU received funding from the research branch of the DES to examine this question. A practitioner with many years' experience of basic education, Sue Abell, led the research and the Institute of Education was commissioned to manage it. Students and tutors in eight contrasting Local Education Authorities participated. In this article Sue Abell highlights key findings from the research.

Background

In 1989 ALBSU commissioned a research project to evaluate the effectiveness of different styles of literacy provision. It had a time scale of two years and was staffed by one project worker with clerical assistance.

The initial phase of the research was to establish what measures of effectiveness should be used. Students, teachers and organisers were consulted:

- The students were clear that progress in their literacy skills was what constituted effectiveness.
- The tutors saw their capacity to meet a range of different student needs as the most crucial measure of effectiveness.
- Organisers cited the procedures used by teachers to monitor student learning as of paramount importance.

Accordingly, the measures of effectiveness used reflected these concerns and others expressed by the participants consulted: Recruitment, attendance, Aims and targets, progress, satisfaction and progression.

In order to gather data from a sufficient number of students, teachers and organisers a survey method was adopted for the research.

The provision found in the participating areas included:

- Adult Education
- Further Education
- Workbase Provision
- Open Learning Centres
- Voluntary Organisations
- Training Agency Provision

Within this provision, learning was organised:

- on an individual basis
- in groups
- in workshops
- through open learning
- in drop-in
- but mainly through a mixture of individual and groups

The ten authorities made provision for 5770 students. A sample of tutors gave information on provision for 1730 students. 174 students, in a range of different styles, agreed to be in the main, in depth study. They, together with their tutors and the organisers responsible for their provision were asked to complete questionnaires between September 1989 July 1990. A sample of participants with differing roles was interviewed and provision was observed. Finally, as writing was most often cited as a reason for participation in literacy provision, a further subset of the sample had examples of their writing scrutinised to see if any changes could be detected over time.

The response of students and tutors was very good though there were inevitably gaps in the data created by both students and tutors leaving provision during the course of the research.

What the Research Found

- The students who participated in the research were convinced that they had made progress. The evidence suggested that they actually had made progress. Such progress was not tied to a particular style of provision. All styles of provision examined in the study were advocated and praised by some students. It seems clear therefore that a

range of styles is necessary in order to meet the needs and preferences of potential students.

- Absorbing all potential students into provision seemed to result in difficulties of manageability. There seemed to be a lack of specification of the needs that could be met by any style of provision.
- Careful assessment of student needs and preferences, although theoretically undertaken, was not recorded systematically in all examples of the provision in the study. Neither was the monitoring of students' progress always reliable.
- As the reality is that students attend the most convenient provision, tutors in every style need to be convinced of the benefits of alternative styles and need to be able to organise learning in a range of styles.
- Courses with fixed time scales and specified objectives seem to provide students with the best chance of success.

Recruitment of Students

Much of the publicity collected during visits to provision spoke of the choice available to students. But the evidence from students was that they almost invariably used provision which was 'convenient, i.e. usually closest, though often also convenient for reasons of time. None of the students providing evidence said that they had selected provision on the basis of its purposes or style.

It seemed clear from their evidence as well as that of teachers that once students arrived at any centre of provision they would be encouraged to enrol there. There was very little likelihood of them being recommended to use any alternative base.

Yet tutors also reported that the catch-all policy in which they operated was not of their choosing and caused them some difficulties.

Aims and Targets

Most of the provision examined prided itself on catering for all comers. There was a very strong reluctance to turn anybody away. This very welcoming approach appeared to create problems in managing learning.

There were examples of sharply targeted provision but these were all externally funded and limited to specific groups of adults.

The policy of enrolling all comers appeared to result in tutors finding difficulty in managing and monitoring provision effectively.

Styles of Provision

Students were asked about their experiences of different styles of provision. They were also asked to comment on which styles they felt worked best for them. Students tended to praise the type of provision in which they found themselves. However, those who had experienced a range of styles were able to offer insights into the ways of organising learning which they perceived as most effective for their purpose. Amongst the students providing evidence some advocated each of the styles examined in the survey. 75% of students in the sample said that they preferred individual tuition, or work in a group of four or fewer people.

Student Progress

As far as the measures used in the research were able to establish, students who remained in provision and attended regularly, did make progress. 96% of those who remained in the sample had made progress in their own estimation, which was confirmed both by tutor reports and by independent assessment. But this progress did not depend upon the style of provision experienced.

The overwhelming impression gained from the data is of the high value placed on their experience in literacy provision by students. However, it needs to be born in mind that such gains were reported by 60% of students in the sample, the remainder not making returns, often because they had left provision during the course of the research.

Student Attendance

Most styles of provision seemed to work best where students attended regularly. But rarely were demands made for them to do so. The evidence of registers showed that in many classes more students were absent than present. This often created problems of manageability.

Monitoring of Student Progress

Although all teachers in the survey said that they kept written records and that such records were an important aspect of their teaching, fewer than 10 per cent reported the use of structured assessment procedures and most reported difficulty in maintaining regular review procedures. Only where regular assessment and review were tied to specific proposals to funders did it appear to take place reliably.

ALBSU will shortly be publishing a summary of the research findings. Details will be given in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Lessons to be Learned

Recruitment of Students

For learning to be organised in a manageable way, literacy providers need to identify and describe what they are offering. Teachers need to have a say in the range of student needs with which they will engage. They need staff development and support which acknowledges the breadth of their role.

Aims and Targets

In order that resources can be best used to match need it is necessary for providers to specify what range of needs they intend to cater for.

Student Progress

Progress does not appear to be dependent upon the style of provision. Factors such as regular attendance and commitment on the part of students and fixed timescales and specified outcomes appear to have more effect upon progress.

Student Attendance

Registers could be used more fully to help in monitoring of provision. More commitment could be demanded of students in respect of attendance and home study.

Student Satisfaction

Students valued their provision highly but it was clear that working individually or in a very small group was the style favoured by most students. There are implications here for the way in which learning is organised. ■

REVIEWS

The Blast-Off Remedial Scheme

by Dorothy Mason

Published by Magic Steps Publications, 30 St Oswalds Court, Redland, Bristol BS6 7HX

Price: £190 plus £5.50 p&p

No ISBN

We are used to the well rehearsed arguments of the exponents of the Language Experience approach to reading and know that as a method it is very effective. It is adult, functional, relevant, encourages fluency and gives the reader maximum support. It can be used flexibly, it can be customised to the individual, it can be used with humour – as part of a programme of activities. It is a useful starting point for a beginner reader.

I was interested, therefore, to receive for review 'The Blast-Off Remedial Reading Scheme' which the author claims can teach all the main reading and spelling rules and many exceptions. 'A dynamic and unbelievably quick method of teaching the skills of reading to non-reading adults, older children and immigrants'.

The Blast Off package includes:

1. A copy of the teachers book 'How to Help the Non-Reader'
2. An instruction leaflet giving guidance page by page and suggestions of games to play.
3. A carrying case containing 30 cassette tapes
4. Four copies of the students book 'Answers'
5. Five sets of flashcards, a total of 814.

Page 1 of the answer book has an illustration of a cat stuck in a tree. Beneath it is written:

c **a** **ca** t **cat**

The first cassette provides the listener with: c **a** **ca**! **cat**

A dynamic method? On the contrary, it is patronising, childish, tedious, demeaning and totally inappropriate for adults. The choice of the first word sets the tone of the whole scheme. CAT – surely one of the words most closely associated with the old-fashioned reading schemes written for children? It moves on, page after page, building up strings of words that may have similar sounds but can have little relevance to adult readers – for example, on page 54 we meet 'castle, fasten, hasten, soften' and on page 55 'knuckle, knight, knock, knave, known' – each page accompanied by a tape.

In terms of content the words are ill chosen and do not adequately reflect gender and equal opportunities. In terms of presentation the material is drab, uninviting and dated. In terms of methodology I remain totally unconvinced that this package would be effective. 'With Answers and the tapes that go with it', claims the author, Dorothy Mason, 'the unhappy adult non-reader can teach himself in a matter of weeks, several months at the most and his whole life can be changed'. If someone were brave or foolhardy enough to persevere with this system I daresay he or she might be able to enunciate a string of apparently unrelated words. Is this reading?

Because this scheme so closely resembles some of the material they received at school, adults might be seduced into thinking this is the only way to learn to read.

During the summer, a reading survey was carried out in educational establishments in Norfolk including post-16 and Adult Education. It is interesting to note that one of the recommendations to the LEA is that those with reading difficulties need *more* opportunities for imaginative involvement, for making choice and for personal initiative. It is exactly this reason which makes the Blast-Off books and tapes so stultifying. The scheme offers no choice, no fluency, no text and no opportunities for personal initiative.

'Learning to read is more complicated than we would wish', writes Mary McGarva (Viewpoints 11, The Teaching of Reading). This is why it is so important to create a positive reading environment, to use a variety of strategies and to provide a range of high quality reading material which is adult and accessible, which offers choice and which includes humour, pace and style – the 'Blast-Off' Package offers none of these.

Andrea Mearing
County-Co-ordinator for Adult Basic Education,
Norfolk Education Authority

Core Skills: An Integrated Pack for Students with Learning Difficulties

by Tom Ralph and Monica Ralph

Published by Stanley Thornes (Publishers) Ltd

Price: £45.00

ISBN 0 7487 1248 8

Tom and Monica Ralph have developed this core skills pack for students' with a variety of abilities including those with moderate learning difficulties at school or college, students who are experiencing difficulties with course work and need extra support and students who require help with literacy, numeracy, social and study skills.

The 164 page A4 ringbound book is packed with topics and activities which students can work through on their own or with a tutor in a group. The material can be adapted to suit the complete range of abilities as it aims to teach literacy and numeracy through social development. It contains three units of useful material on college/school, the community and 'being yourself'.

The material is divided into three sections with information sheets about each activity, what will be needed to do the activity and topics to think about or discuss. Each activity is described and presented clearly and accompanied by photocopiable work sheets which a student can collate into a useful file. The pack is designed so that the students can complete activities on their own and is not designed to be a taught course. However, it is assumed that there will be guidance in the form of a tutor or teacher and for reference, at the end of each unit there are Tutor Guide Sheets which give a brief account of the subject area covered and what resources are required for the group.

Some material can be used/adapted for basic education purposes but the majority would be most valuable as a new source of material for group tutors, since it covers a wide range of topics in a clear and useful format.

Elaine Clarke
Tutor/Organiser
Cornwall Education Authority

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Public Libraries and Adult Literacy in Ireland: A Study

by Margaret Burke and Catherine Keane

Published by The Library Council, 53/54 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2

Price: £10.00 incl p&p

ISBN 1 873512 01 5

In the mid-1970's, most Public Libraries became involved in the high-profile, national and international adult literacy campaigns. After a few years though, the enthusiasm waned in most cases and what remains, if anything, are small and under-utilised collections of adult literacy materials and special relationships between individual tutors and librarians. In the intervening fifteen years or so, much has happened to public libraries. They were, first of all, caught in the grip of the technological revolution, with pressure to develop alternative ways of providing information other than through the printed word. Then came pressure to generate income to help cover costs, which, as the core service of book provision was to remain free, again threw the emphasis of thinking and service development onto non-book media. Finally, all public libraries have, to some extent at least, been affected by general reductions in the funding of public services and the need to cut costs, and often services, to the bone. This led to a kind of siege mentality amongst librarians with any suggestion for new initiatives or service improvements met with the response 'we can't afford to – we don't have the money, staff, space, books etc.'

The publication of the results of this survey into adult literacy provision in the Republic of Ireland is very timely. First, there does appear to be an increasing recognition that public libraries do have as their primary responsibility the promotion of books and reading. Second, we must not, as a profession, continue to 'talk down' our abilities and services and instead recognise that much can be done at very little additional cost simply by changing our attitude and approach.

The authors of the report have used the largely negative survey results (apart from a few bright spots such as Dublin) to present very many positive ideas about how the situation could be improved if librarians were prepared to take on a more proactive role. All the library authorities report that they considered that, 'provision of materials' was the most important element of the public library's adult literacy role. The authors use the responses from the adult literacy organisers to suggest that, although providing literacy materials is important, even more important is the liaison role that the public library staff can play and the provision of publicity and information about library needs and services.

This report deserves a wide readership amongst librarians in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland for the clear and sensible approaches it makes to the Public Library's role in respect of adult literacy.

Patricia M. Coleman
Director of Library Services
Birmingham City Council

Everyday Cloze

by Hugh and Margaret Brown

Published by Brown & Brown, Keepers Cottage, Westward, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 8NQ.

Price: £1.80

ISBN 1 870596 285

This is a book of cloze exercises for use by students to practise everyday basic reading skills.

The 47 x A5 pages (of recycled paper, I was glad to see) each contain at least one short reading piece with several words left out and/or a sign or notice with one or two words missing. All the pieces and signs are examples of fairly everyday texts of varying complexity.

The student I showed the book to was not, initially, sure of its purpose. Having one or more, apparently unconnected, pieces on each page she found confusing. However, after only a short explanation that the aim was to provide practice in reading skills and that each piece was, ideally, something she would come across, she took it home with her.

The next week she was delighted to report that she had been right through the whole book and had been able to see for herself that, as she progressed, the fluency of her reading improved. By the time she was only part way through she was 'filling in the gaps' almost without thinking about it and certainly without stopping.

This will now, undoubtedly, lead on to our working together on preparing larger cloze exercises specifically for her use. It also fits in nicely with the work being done within the group as a whole on comprehension, choice of language, spelling, use of a dictionary, etc. A situation which I am sure could be duplicated in almost any ABE group across the country.

Wendy Mason
Assistant Area Organiser
Dorset Education Authority

Everyday Reading

Hugh and Margaret Brown

Published by Brown & Brown, Keepers Cottage, Westward, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 8NQ

Price: £1.80 inc. p&p

ISBN 1 870596 27 7

'Everyday Reading' is a booklet of extracts from, as the title says, everyday reading matter with accompanying exercises aimed at improving basic reading skills. It was very well received by tutors as an inexpensive resource for many of their beginner students.

The print is clear, good sized and well laid out, though a couple of the photos are indistinct. The range of texts is wide and appropriate and covers signs; cooking, washing and product instructions; menus; job adverts; meters; handbooks and letters from school. The exercises encourage reading for meaning and give practice in skimming and scanning skills. There are many exercises for each piece of text. Most are non-threatening for the student concerned about writing correctly, having yes/no/maybe options; sentence joining; missing word activities, etc. Question and answer sections also appear.

Many of the texts are relevant for Wordpower Foundation Level and meet the needs of students at that level. Students who have sampled the book have found the texts interesting, the instructions clear and have

generally enjoyed the exercises. It is questionable how appropriate though, are a couple of exercises for the beginner reader; for example, the occasion the student is asked to memorise a passage of over 50 words and then to supply missing word answers. This seems out of keeping with the rest of the book.

Apart from this reservation and the availability of similar material, Everyday Reading is a useful tutor resource and good value for money.

Barbara Durrant
ABE Organiser
Solihull Education Authority

First Steps in Crime Series

by Sally McKeown

Published by Spike Press. (Available from Avanti Books, 8 Parsons Green, Boulton Road, Stevenage, Herts SG1 4QL.)

Price: £1.75

ISBN 1 872916 147
ISBN 1 872916 163
ISBN 1 872916 155
ISBN 1 872916 171
ISBN 1 872916 18X

There are 5 booklets in this series so far. Some of the titles give a good idea of the ground covered: *Peeping Tom*, *Taken for a Ride* (about stealing cars), *Stan the Thug*. The other two *(Time Runs Out* and *Poor Rob)* concern shoplifting and bank robbery. The books appear to be aimed at basic reading students. Sentences are short and the vocabulary simple. Overall, the books are well produced on good quality paper, with clear print and bold illustrations.

First Steps in Crime have little relationship to classic literary concerns with crime. The booklets are not 'who done its', nor, it should be stressed, are they handbooks for practice. They are both simple accounts of particular crimes committed by the subject and smug morality tales. I do not know whether other series are planned, but, in the absence of others to date, anxiety could be expressed that there is an assumption that our students are interested in these topics, especially when dealt with in the manner of the booklets.

The booklets present working class crime without any attempt to contextualise or explain it. There are no examples of white collar fraud nor crimes of the powerful. Everyone gets caught through chance or stupidity and, in one case *(Peeping Tom)*, retribution is swift and simple: 'A man got Tom by the hair. The man hit Tom. He hit him again and again'. Clearly, therapy will not be necessary. '... Tom will not be peeping in windows. He still can't open his eyes'. The message of the booklets is reinforced throughout by Doug Hatfield's strikingly offensive illustrations that stereotype working class people ... they drink, smoke, are fat/bony and ugly.

The lack of attempt to introduce any complexity into the social issues surrounding crime is mirrored in the quite unimaginative use of language and dialogue. At the end of each booklet there is an attempt to be humorous. By this time anger rather than fun might be a more relevant emotion. These booklets cannot be recommended.

Mary Harrison
ABE Organiser (Link into Learning)
Leicestershire Education Authority

Can't Wait for Summer

by Theresa Saservino

Speaking From the Heart

by Various Authors

Published by Literacy Volunteers of New York City

Sole Distributor: Avanti Books, 8 Parsons Green, Boulton Road, Pin Green Industrial Estate, Stevenage, Herts SG1 4QG

Price: £2.25 each

ISBN 0 929631 07 2
ISBN 0 929631 16 1

These are two titles in a series from the New Writers' Voices series written by students of the 'New York Literacy Programmes'. They are small paperbacks of approximately 64 pages with glossy covers and 'blotting paper' innards.

The first book, 'Can't Wait for Summer', is the better of the two. It is an autobiographical piece about Theresa and her friends and their holidays by the sea. Theresa recounts some comical episodes including the day Dennis' hairpiece flew off during a speedboat race and the time she found a gruesome 'thing' while they were out looking for clams. She writes well, it's a good story and it is printed in short paragraphs with photographic illustrations and an average of 20 words per page. It is, therefore, an easy read while the content is adult-oriented. I enjoyed the book and so did the two students I invited to read it, although Stella had lots of queries about the content. One was: what are clams? Zully found it 'pretty good'. He liked the format and the pictures and thought it suitable for all types of people. Almost the best part, for me, is the discussion which fills the last 10 pages. The author of the book, her tutor and her editor talk about how Theresa writes, how the book was written and edited and the boost writing has given to Theresa's confidence. I think this would make a useful starting point to many debates about the writing process.

'Speaking From the Heart' is a book of poems and short articles collected into sections on 'Life', 'Courtship', and 'Relationships'. Some parts of the book are touching and some amusing but I'm afraid I found the content uneven with quite a few of the pieces embarrassingly awful.

The overall appearance of the books is tatty. Stella liked the covers but reported that 'the grey colour of the pages was not inviting'. I do not think they offer good value at the price. A lot of expressions in both books reflect their United States origins and, if the rest of the series is of a similar quality, I feel that the best that can come from it is that it will inspire us and our students to produce our own books and stories. I am sure that many of us could do just as well as these.

Phil Warrington
Study Support Workshop Leader
Warwickshire Education Authority

Spelling 1 – Runcorn Open Learning Packs

by Anne Ames, Kristin Hutchinson, Keith Williams, Chris Jackson, Barbara Brown

Published by Runcorn Open Study Centre, Halton College of FE, Chapel Street Annexe, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2ED

Price: £86.00

No ISBN

The Spelling Pack is a ring binder of self study modules covering suffixes, plurals and silent letters.

Each module contains objectives and benefits, an introduction and a number of activities. A Master Evaluation sheet is supplied for you to copy and make available for student

use at the end of each module. An extension sheet is also included so that you can list other relevant materials available at your centre.

The pack is well presented and clear. Each sheet is laid out in an uncluttered way, so that unconfident readers could cope with it. The instructions are easy to follow and sensible, down to earth language is used.

However, the words used in the activities as examples of common spelling patterns are rather difficult. This is inevitable, I guess. We have all run out of sensible words to illustrate the silent 'w' pattern – 'wring, wretched, wrench, wrought, wrath ...'

Linked with this, there are problems for the second language learner and, because there are no illustrations or graphics, the activities demand a sophisticated vocabulary or continual use of a dictionary.

The authors suggest that the pack is broken up and repackaged for student self-access. This is absolutely essential as the file is large and unwieldy – tutors need to allow themselves time to access the usefulness of the material and then break it up into bite-sized chunks. Photocopying onto coloured paper to code each section is suggested and this makes sound sense.

This is a good pack but you need to do more work on it to make it accessible to students. Many centres may well find it rather over priced however, for work that, although well presented, is not particularly original. It is recommended if you are not looking for the bargain of the month.

Chris Taylor
Open Learning Centre Co-ordinator
Tower Hamlets Education Authority

Developing Competence in Numeracy

by Joy Joseph and Tanya Merry

Published by Avon FE Development Centre, Stile Acres, Lawrence Weston, Bristol BS11 0QA

Price: £15.50

No ISBN

This pack is a collection of resources for numeracy staff development and contains a statement of competences expected at different stages of a tutor's work, from the initial volunteer through to the numeracy organiser or trainer, and ideas for developing these. The competences serve as a self-assessment checklist and parts of the pack could be used for distance learning.

The pack is very flexible – although it was written to fit in with Avon ABE Certification, it can easily fit into other local and national numeracy tutor accreditation. It is very clearly laid out and has two main sections, one based on the competences and the other on further development. The competence section takes each competence, explains what is meant and asks related questions which could be used for individual or group study. These are followed with comments (which should not be looked at first!) and ideas for development, and then gives specific reference to other related material. The further development section has suggestions for training resources and a few photocopiable worksheets.

The competence section may seem a little boring at first, with each one following the same format, but the pack has to be seen for what it is, an aid to developing competence, and not just as a training manual with course outlines. There are enough suggestions in the pack to ensure variety and there are plenty of references to adequate material in other books that can also be used. One of its most useful aspects to me is that it gives precise references to other numeracy training materials available.

There is no doubt that this pack has a sound theoretical basis. It is good to have some numeracy training material that actually goes beyond the initial stages and it should prove useful to all numeracy trainers, as well as tutors who are working towards in-service accreditation such as the C&G 9281 Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills.

Jenny Walsh
ABE Staff Development Organiser
Liverpool Education Authority

Getting to Know Your Local Paper

by Moira Edwards and Barbara Connor, Second Chance, Clwyd (with help of North Wales Newspaper Ltd)

Published by Second Chance, Rhyl Library, Church Street, Rhyl, Clwyd

Price: £5.50 incl. p&p

No ISBN

This resource pack for tutors and students is in the form of a Thursday evening edition of the 'Evening Leader' – the local newspaper for the Second Chance Service in Clwyd.

The newspaper is on separate sheets and consists of articles, reports and features cut from the 'Evening Leader' and interspersed with questions and ideas for further writing. The A3 format ensures that there are only one or two articles or features on a page making it more user friendly.

Many students will find it useful to work straight from the 'Evening Leader' sheets, enjoying the added interest of news from another region. It can also be a useful starting point for an individual or group of students and tutors to investigate and make links with their local newspaper. There are some useful tips and reminders on how to get started on a similar project, which could lead, as it has for The Second Chance students, to a regular students' corner in their local paper.

Joan Pittman
Project Manager, Cricklade College
Open Learning Centre
Hampshire Education Authority

Handwriting Review 1991

by Jean Alston

Published by Handwriting Interest Group (HIG), Janet Tootall, West Hill High School, Thompson Cross, Staleybridge, Cheshire SK15 1LX

Price: £5.00 including membership of HIG
£4.40 excluding membership of HIG

ISBN 1 872832 008

This book looked distinctly uninviting to read and I was therefore surprised to find it more interesting than I had expected. It is produced by the Handwriting Interest Group Committee and consists of articles submitted by people in the field reporting on research projects and to some extent writing; of synopses of various other current research and practice studies and finally reviews of text books, copy books and teaching materials. The articles are all fairly short, some including tables of data with brief conclusions as to what the findings might represent or point to as a way ahead.

In the opening editorial it is stated that, 'In teaching and research emphasis remains on reading, but for many of our children it is the task of

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putting pen to paper that causes major problems with writing and spelling.' This in itself I found rather puzzling in that it seems to me to take on a bigger dimension than just handwriting. In fact one of the articles in the book mainly addresses writing as a craft with very little reference to handwriting as a special issue. The articles included in the book cover handwriting and how it is being addressed in the national curriculum; how teachers can judge handwriting in a standardised and non-subjective way; evaluating letter models on the basis of psychomotor criteria; the pros and cons of teaching cursive handwriting to 3 to 7 year olds; the place of spelling in the writing process; running a 4-day workshop to interest children in letters and writing; handwriting and presentation in the secondary school and, the good news about writing with a pencil! Although I enjoyed reading most of the articles the whole emphasis is on children and schools. Anyone interested in knowing more about current thinking on handwriting in the schools sector either for personal insight, or as the background for a special study, or as a perspective on which to base a handwriting course for adults might find the book of interest. The article on page 37 about the place of spelling in writing was reassuring in that it advocated getting content and ideas right and then gradually moving through the various stages of drafting to a final version where everything counts. It also recommends Look, Cover, Write, Check as a learning technique for spellers.

As a reviewer I am not sorry to have read this book because I am interested in handwriting, but it does not contain much that relates to adults and is not a publication that I feel would be a vital asset in an ABE scheme's staff or student library. Perhaps someone from Adult Education should write a contribution about adults and handwriting for the Handwriting Review 1992.

Carolyn Kewley
Special Adult Learning Programme (South)
Bedfordshire Education Authority

Too Late
Just My Luck
Keep Your Hair On

by Frances Holden

Published by Gatehouse Books, St Luke's, Sawley Road, Miles Platting, Manchester. M10 8DB

Price: £1.00 each

ISBN 0 906253 12 8 **ISBN 0 906253 14 4**
ISBN 0 906253 11 X

These three books, all by the same author, are short humorous stories, based on the writer's own experiences. 'Too Late' recounts an unusual trip to the dentist, where being unable to read caused some misunderstanding. 'Just My Luck' tells the story of a drama-laden wedding day and the third book, 'Keep Your Hair On' is a story about a Christmas Eve party where the author's friend almost loses her head.

The three books are all clearly written with short passages of text accompanied by an illustration on every page. At the back of the book the writer explains how she accomplished her writing in spite of problems and the help she was given in producing the book. The three stories also demonstrate the writer's own progress in so far as the first book was taped and then written with the tutor's help, the other two were drafted by the student herself. The last book contains a copy of the original writing from which the story was taken.

The books are fun to read, although the last book contains a few grammatical errors which are off-putting. They are written very much in a conversational style and the reader feels she is listening to the story being recounted. My students enjoyed all three and found them short enough to read with interest. A discussion about the author having herself experienced reading problems also prompted my students to write for themselves and so I would recommend them for beginner readers, not only as interesting stories but also as a source of inspiration.

Theresa Davies
Group Tutor
Dyfed Education Authority

Short Notices

Secret Lives

by various writers

Edited by Julie Ward

Published by Yorkshire Art Circus

Price: £3.95

ISBN 0 947780 45 9

Julie Ward was Writer-in-Residence at the Swathmore Centre, Leeds in a project exploring creative writing with people with learning difficulties.

Teaching Students With a Mental Handicap

by Jill Shepherd and Annabel Tetlow

Published by East Sussex County Council

Distributed by Avanti Books, 1 Wellington Road, Stevenage, Herts. SG2 9HR

Price: £1.25 inc p&p

No ISBN

This handbook is written from the viewpoint of two teachers who were appointed to teach students with mental handicaps – having had no specialised preparation or training.

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in November, February, May and July. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor, at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic education.

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